Refiguring the Wild West: Minerva Teichert and her Feminine Communities

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ABSTRACT

Refiguring the Wild West: Minerva Teichert and Her Feminine Communities

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Minerva Teichert (1888-1976) was a twentieth-century American artist, who spent most of her life residing in remote towns in the West, earnestly balancing the demands of family and ranching, and painting scenes of her beloved Western frontier. Her steady and significant production of art is remarkable for any artist, and particularly compelling when one considers her time constraints, inaccessibility of art supplies, distance from other artists and art centers, and lack of public attention. The success of women artists during the first half of the twentieth-century was dependent not only upon their artistic aptitude, but also upon external forces, such as family, friends, and mentors. As an artist during this era, Teichert benefitted especially from the circles of women who surrounded her, offering sympathy, encouragement, assistance, a ready network of support, and who enabled her to pursue her passion, which she succinctly described, “I must paint.”

This thesis employs a methodological framework informed by feminist, collective conscience, and social network theories in order to elucidate an artist’s vision that transcends feminist viewpoints and western heroic individualism. The reality of female networks in Teichert’s life translates not only to the certainty of women within a Western mythology dominated by men but also to a powerful counter-narrative where collaboration and community are essential to the success of settlements in the American West. Here Teichert introduces an altogether different vision and story. In her pioneer paintings, composed during the 1930s and 1940s, one sees a reflection of her own life, and that of her pioneer ancestors, which emphasizes the feminine, the importance of collaboration, and the centrality of community.

Key Words: Minerva Teichert, woman artist, American Western frontier, Latter-day Saint pioneer, network, collaboration, community
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In pursuing my dream of studying art history and making a contribution to the scholarship on Minerva Teichert, I have come to experience what Teichert did over a century ago. That following a passion and finding a measure of success comes as the result of being surrounded by supportive, nurturing women, in the shape of feminine communities.

To be certain, there are men in my life who have shared their love and expertise and encouraged me to do that which at times seemed impossible. I am grateful to my father, Lawrence Louis Crane, Jr., for his constant positiveness and seeing even my smallest steps in a successful light; to my adviser Dr. James Russel Swensen, for his brilliant contributions, tireless patience, and steady encouragement; and to my husband, Brett G. Scharffs, for helping me to balance the demands of home and school (not minding mismatched socks and dinnerless nights), suggesting insightful possibilities at my scholarly dead ends, and cheering me on like crazy.

And it is the women, communities of women, who have graced my life with their endless forms of support. The circle of women in my family – my mother, sister, daughters, and mother-in-law – have repeatedly expressed interest in my academic endeavor. My circle of friends and particularly my fellow art history graduate companions, seven women with whom I have enjoyed forming bonds, have fostered in me an even greater understanding and affection for art history. In my academic circle, Dr. Martha M. Peacock quickly became my role model, emboldened me with a foundation in art theory, and shared her regard for thoughtful, meaningful scholarship. Everyone needs a mentor like Teichert’s Alice Merrill Horne, a woman who is passionate, fearless, and a dear friend, who for me is Dr. Marian Wardle. Dr. Wardle encouraged my earliest inkling to study art history, and with her knowledge and enthusiasm, has enabled my study of Minerva Teichert. For these communities of support in my life, I am most grateful.
DEDICATION

To my children, Elliot, Sophelia, and Ella,

who are each so colossal
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title Page</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formative Years</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Communities in Life</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Communities in Paint</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figures</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1  Minerva Teichert, 1916. Photograph ............................................................................ 52
Figure 2  Minerva Teichert (at far left) with friends, Pocatello, Idaho, c. 1916. Photograph. Private collection .......................................................................................................................... 52
Figure 3  Minerva Wade Hickman. Photograph ........................................................................... 53
Figure 4  Mary Ella Hickman Kohlhepp, c. 1910. Photograph. Private collection ...................... 53
Figure 5  Minerva with her sisters Eda, Sara, and Annalee in American Falls, Idaho, 1915. Photograph ............................................................................................................................ 54
Figure 6  Rose Hartwell, Nursery Corner, c. 1910. Oil on canvas, 23 ¾ x 28 ¾ in. Brigham Young University Museum of Art ............................................................................................................................................................................................. 54
Figure 7  Mary Teasdale, Mother and Child, c. 1920. Oil on canvas, 30 ½ x 24 ½ in. Utah State Fine Arts Collection, Salt Lake City, Utah .................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................. 55
Figure 8  Fra Dana, Birdcage, n.d. Oil on panel, 18 x 24 in. Montana Museum of Art & Culture ............................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................. 55
Figure 9  Florence Ware, Dry Creek, Autumn at the Foot of the Mountains, 1930. Oil on board, 16 x 20 in. Springville Museum of Art ............................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................. 56
Figure 10 Louise Rönnebeck, The Fertile Land Remembers, c. 1936. Oil on canvas, 60 x 120 in. U.S. Treasury Department award for Worland, Wyoming, U.S. Post Office (moved to Casper, Wyoming U.S. Post Office, 1970s) ............................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................. 56
Figure 11 Louise Rönnebeck, The Harvest, 1940. Oil on canvas, 72 x 108 in. U.S. General Services Administration Federal Art & Art-in-Architecture Programs for Grand Junction, Colorado Post Office (moved to the Wayne N. Aspinall Federal Building, Grand Junction, Colorado) ............................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................. 57
Figure 12 Danquart (Daniel) Anthon Weggeland, Handcart Company, 1908. Church History Museum, Salt Lake City, Utah ............................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................. 57
Figure 13 George M. Ottinger, Away Away to the Mountain Dell: The Valley of the Free Immigrant Train, 1897. Oil on canvas, 20 x 40 in. Springville Museum of Art ............................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................. 58
Figure 14 Carl Christian Anton Christensen, Handcart Pioneers, 1900. Oil on canvas, 25 3/8 x 38 ¼ in. Church History Museum, Salt Lake City, Utah ............................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................. 58
Figure 15 Carl Christian Anton Christensen, Mormon Panorama Eighteen, also known as Crossing the Mississippi on the Ice, c. 1878. Tempera on muslin, 77 7/8 x 114 in. Brigham Young University Museum of Art ............................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................. 59
Figure 16 Albert Bierstadt, In the Sierras, 1868. Oil on canvas, 13 x 16 in. Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum ............................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................. 59
Figure 17 Thomas Moran, The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone, 1893-1901. Oil on canvas, 96 ½ x 168 3/8 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum ............................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................. 60
Figure 18 Frederic Remington, A Dash for the Timber, 1889. Oil on canvas, 48 ½ x 84 1/8 in. Amon Carter Museum of American Art ............................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................. 60
Figure 19  Charles M. Russell, *Battle of Belly River*, c. 1905. Oil on canvas, 18 ¼ x 22 ½ in. Private collection .................................................................................................................................. 61

Figure 20  N.C. Wyeth, *The Great Train Robbery*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 44 x 33 1/8 in. Brandywine River Museum .................................................................................................................................. 61

Figure 21  Minerva Teichert, *Zion Ho! (Handcart Pioneers)*, c. 1935. Oil on canvas, 56 x 49 in. Church History Museum, Salt Lake City, Utah .................................................................................................................................. 62

Figure 22  Minerva Teichert, *Portrait of Sara Kohlhepp*, 1917. Oil on canvas, 72 x 36 in. Private collection .................................................................................................................................. 62

Figure 23  Minerva Teichert, *Gypsy Dancer*, c. 1940. Oil on canvas, 46 x 44 ½ in. Private collection .................................................................................................................................. 63

Figure 24  Minerva Teichert, *Carmen*, 1948. Oil on canvas, 52 x 38 ½ in. Private collection .................................................................................................................................. 63

Figure 25  Minerva Teichert, *A Refreshing Respite from the Wagon Train*, 1955. Oil on artist’s board, 42 x 54 in. Brigham Young University Museum of Art .................................................................................................................................. 64

Figure 26  Graduating Class, Pocatello High School, 1906. Photograph. Private collection (Minerva Teichert is pictured standing on the right, while Eva Kasiska is seated on the left) .................................................................................................................................. 64

Figure 27  Robert Henri’s Art Students League painting class, New York, c. 1916 (Minerva Teichert is on the third row, fourth from the right) .................................................................................................................................. 65

Figure 28  Minerva Teichert, *Esther Before the King*, 1916. Oil on canvas, 63 x 45 ¼ in. Church History Museum, Salt Lake City, Utah .................................................................................................................................. 65

Figure 29  Minerva Teichert, *Immigrants to New York City (Jewish Refugees)*, 1938. Oil on canvas, 85 x 61 in. Brigham Young University Museum of Art .................................................................................................................................. 66

Figure 30  Minerva Teichert, *Washday on the Plains*, 1938. Oil on canvas, 40 x 94 in. Brigham Young University Museum of Art .................................................................................................................................. 66

Figure 31  Minerva Teichert, *Cokeville Wyoming Ward Relief Society Quilters*, 1932. Oil on canvas, 41 x 28 in. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Cokeville Wyoming Meetinghouse .................................................................................................................................. 67

Figure 32  Minerva Teichert, *Indian Basket and Pottery Makers*, c. 1935. Oil on canvas, 72 x 98 in. Private collection .................................................................................................................................. 67

Figure 33  Minerva Teichert, *Moving South* (also known as *Squaws* or *The Squaws*), 1949. Oil on canvas, 60 x 101 in. Brigham Young University Museum of Art .................................................................................................................................. 68

Figure 34  Minerva Teichert, *Weavers*, c. 1935. Oil on canvas, 68 ½ x 94 ½ in. Private collection .................................................................................................................................. 68

Figure 35  Minnie F. Howard. Photograph .................................................................................................................................. 69

Figure 36  Alice Merrill Horne. Photograph .................................................................................................................................. 69

Figure 37  Puvis de Chavannes, *The Sacred Grove, Beloved of the Arts and the Muses*, 1884-89. Oil on canvas, 36 7/16 x 90 15/16 in. Art Institute of Chicago .................................................................................................................................. 70

Figure 39  “Sponsor Hangs Painting In New Mural Exhibit,” *The Deseret News*, February 27, 1939 .................................................................................................................................. 71
Figure 40 Minerva Teichert, *Handcart Pioneers*, 1932. Oil on canvas, 67 ½ x 50 in. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Cokeville Wyoming Meetinghouse

Figure 41 Minerva Teichert, *Handcart Pioneers*, 1939. Oil on canvas, 59 x 46 in. Church History Museum, Salt Lake City, Utah

Figure 42 Minerva Teichert, *Handcart Pioneers*, c. 1935. Oil on canvas, 99 x 84 in. Church History Museum, Salt Lake City, Utah

Figure 43 Minerva Teichert, *Get Ye Up into the High Mountain, Oh Zion*, 1949. Oil on canvas, 42 x 60 in. Private collection

Figure 44 Carl Christian Anton Christensen, *Handcart Pioneers Coming Through the Mountains*, (no date). Oil on canvas, 15 x 24 1/16 in. Private collection
Introduction

Driven like a wagon team blazing a trail into the American West, the artist Minerva Teichert (1888-1976) (figure 1) was compelled to illustrate her singular vision of the Western frontier. In her autobiography, Teichert wrote, “I do not care for bridge or teas or clubs but the story of the building of a mountain empire and the struggles of my people drive me on and unless I can paint a little each day on the great pageant of the West I think the day is lost.” She descended from Latter-day Saint pioneers, and with a strong passion to capture their saga of settling the American West, Teichert embarked upon her own pioneer journey of departing from tradition. She was one of few Western women in the early twentieth-century who received an art education in the cosmopolitan cities of Chicago and New York, and perhaps the only one to later settle on an obscure cattle ranch in the rocky and rugged West. There she carried out with enthusiasm and energy her dream of depicting a deeply human, feminine, and communal understanding of the great Western migration and colonization.  

Teichert’s life was lived mostly in remote venues in the American West. After returning home from her art education, her contact with art and other artists was limited to consulting art books in her possession, as well as a few letters from her renowned art teacher, Robert Henri.  

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2 The meaning of the term “feminine” throughout this thesis is based upon the Merriam-Webster Dictionary definition, “characteristic of, relating to, suited to, or unique to the gender of girls or women.” Feminine does not mean dainty, lovely, frivolous, fragile, helpless, or an understanding based on a value judgment, as might be construed in a social context. www.merriam-webster.com, accessed 5 February 2016.

3 The art curator Robert O. Davis refers to Teichert’s resources as art books, pictures on postcards, Native American artifacts, and issues of *National Geographic*. Robert O. Davis, “I Must Paint,” in Laurie Teichert Eastwood and Robert O. Davis, *Rich in Story, Great in Faith: The Art of Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1988), 44. Marian Wardle, art historian and granddaughter to Teichert, states the books that Teichert favored in her collection included illustrations by Remington, Russell and N.C. Wyeth. Conversation with Marian Wardle on 17 November 2015. Correspondence from Robert Henri to Teichert is dated 12 September
This distance from art centers, living most of her professional life in rural Cokeville, a tiny and isolated farming and ranching community in the western edge of Wyoming, perhaps accounts for the paucity of public attention that she and her work received during her lifetime. While her artistic isolation was not unique, her energy and output were nothing short of prodigious. In the span of her career, Teichert completed an impressive oeuvre of over four hundred large-scale, descriptive murals with a sensitivity and style singularly her own. What motivated and enabled her to produce this artistic repertoire from an isolated ranch? In an essay describing women artists and their careers at the turn of the twentieth-century, during the same decades when Teichert was evolving as a painter, art historian Helen Goodman offers several discerning insights. She observes that for artistic women and their accomplishments, aesthetic aptitude alone was not enough for success. According to Goodman, they enlisted many personal and external forces; they had the support and encouragement of family, friends, and mentors; their success, no matter how small, reinforced their self-confidence and steady progress; and their contributions have been historically significant, if not always recognized. Goodman’s conclusion applies directly to Teichert and her artistic development in the remote reaches of the American Western frontier.

1916, Santa Fe, NM, to unknown location, and 20 December 1926, New York, NY to unknown location, as well as two letters addressed to his class at the Art Students League, one dated 15 October 1915, and the other with no date, and neither with locations. Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.  


The support that Minerva Teichert received, which encouraged and cultivated her artistic growth and abundant production, came primarily from the women in her life. To be sure, there were men with whom she enjoyed meaningful relationships and received assistance; she was close to and adored her father, she revered many of her Eastern art instructors, such as John H. Vanderpoel, Kenneth Hayes Miller, and Robert Henri, and was grateful to marry Herman A. Teichert, the “man of her dreams.” Yet most essential was the complex of women surrounding her – individuals within her subscribed networks of family, friends, and professionals. Those included her grandmother, mother, sisters, and daughter; her classmates from Pocatello High School, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Art Students League, and friends from the Latter-day Saint (LDS) Relief Society and Cokeville communities; as well as her professional supporters, patrons, and dealers. Their support came in the form of encouragement, sympathy, financial aid, endorsements in periodicals, professional marketing, and artistic commissions. These steady forms of assistance are documented in a plethora of correspondence spanning her lifetime, which provide evidence and insight to the impact these women had on Teichert’s artistic development.

As Minerva Teichert drew upon these networks comprised of women, as well as the West brought to life by the stories of her ancestors, her paintings of the Western frontier characterize a

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7 Teichert had a fondness for her father, who shared his love of classical literature and the arts. Marian Wardle recounts, “She worshipped him. … She always talked about him in reverent tones. He was absolutely marvelous to her. … He was a dreamer, albeit a very cultured one, who brought that in the lives of his children. All his daughters grew up with the idea that they were somebody even though they had nothing.” Davis, 32; Teichert took a life drawing class from John H. Vanderpoel at the Art Institute of Chicago and considered him “the greatest draftsman America has ever had,” and similarly admired Robert Henri who taught her portraiture at the Art Students League in New York City. In a letter to her mother during the time of her class with Henri, she described him as “about the greatest modern portrait painter in the world.” Marian Wardle, Minerva Teichert’s Murals: The Motivation for Her Large-Scale Production (Master’s Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1988), 32; Minerva Kohlhepp, New York, NY, to Ella Kohlhepp, no location, 31 October 1915, Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU; In her autobiography, Teichert describes a man who she envisioned as her future husband in one of her dreams, and she came to realize that man was Herman A. Teichert. “Autobiography of Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1937) with Annotations” in Wardle, Minerva Teichert: Pageants in Paint, 3, 200, 207.
narrative that deviates notably from the dominant Western male-centered mythology. Teichert’s vision was a West that was settled by women alongside men, often aided by dynamic networks of female communities. Just as the expansion into the Western frontier was able to progress because of the women who labored collectively to establish success upon the land, Teichert’s success as an artist was dependent upon the supportive networks of women surrounding her. This thesis will explore specifically how Minerva Teichert’s life and artistic expression assert a compelling counter-narrative, one that emphasizes the feminine, the importance of collaboration, and the centrality of community, which in turn becomes evident in her renditions of the nineteenth-century American West.

Scholarship to date has often focused on Teichert’s sense of self and her feminist perspective. Her cultural background and dynamic personality are references for understanding her feminist sensibility and her progressive and powerful representations of women in her paintings. In one treatment, Teichert’s confident attitude is rightly attributed to her ancestry, innate independent qualities, upbringing, supportive husband, and Western environment. She is considered by some to be truly representative of the changing status of women and women artists in America during the “New Woman” era.\(^8\) In an examination using a theoretical feminist lens, the art historian Marian Ashby Johnson recognizes Teichert’s propensity to select subjects that emphasize the role of women.\(^9\) In the address, “The Rejoicing Women in the Art of Minerva Teichert,” Marian Wardle, art historian and granddaughter to Teichert, highlights Teichert’s


representations of powerful female figures, as they are underscored through choice of subject, arrangement of composition, use of color, light, and dramatic clothing. Her women embody spirituality and joy, as they celebrate the faith that sustains them.\textsuperscript{10} In 2007 Wardle published \textit{Minerva Teichert: Pageants in Paint}, a comprehensive scholarly treatment of the passionate life and artistic legacy of Teichert. In addition, both Lara Michaela Hanlon and Amy L. Williamson in their art history graduate theses examine Teichert’s progressive interpretation of women on the Western frontier.\textsuperscript{11} Hanlon cites Teichert’s powerful female image as a “Madonna of the prairie,” who was just as much a part of the Western frontier as her male counterpart. Williamson links Teichert’s feminism to the modern-day definition espoused by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich and follows with a post-modern feminist and semiotic interpretation. She examines the artifacts embedded in Teichert’s visual stories, as evidence of correcting any misconceptions of Mormon female pioneers to male and non-Latter-day Saint audiences.

In expanding upon these earlier treatments of women as active agents, this thesis will establish, as it was so evident in Teichert’s own life and paintings, that it was women working together in communities who forged progress and success on the Western frontier. Informed by a methodological framework of contemporary feminism, traditional collective conscience, and social network theories, this thesis will expand beyond feminist viewpoints and western heroic individualism to focus on relationships, friendships, rivalries, professional and religious associations, and the power of communities. By underscoring these networks or communities in


Teichert’s life, which are reflected in her pioneer paintings, one can come to embrace a more complete vision of the American West.

Feminist art historians Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard emphasize the challenging pressure that women’s use of agency exerts upon prevailing culture, noting that “women’s efforts to resist masculinist cultural hegemony produced counterefforts to absorb, counteract, and appropriate their resistances.”¹² Women use their agency in order to pursue personal ambitions, such as Teichert leaving her beloved Western surroundings and applying her teaching salary to fund enrollment in prestigious Eastern art schools. Similarly, when she later returned to the West, married, and raised a family, the expression of her agency continued in her pictorial renditions of noble, dynamic women, and in her determined pursuit of her creative passion, which she described both succinctly and powerfully as a declarative necessity – “I must paint.”¹³ Not only did Teichert demonstrate her agency, but also engaged the agency and “counterefforts” of other women, as their collective support was necessary in order to enable her success in producing and marketing art within the constraints of a patriarchal society.

Teichert’s agency also became a means of lasting influence. By portraying valiant, determined pioneer women in the midst of strenuous hardships, viewers, especially younger generations, are inspired by women’s earlier accomplishments. In a contemporary interpretation of feminism, Iris Van der Tuin, professor of gender studies at Utrecht University, highlights feminism as an inter/transgenerational, spatiotemporal continuity – continuous without periodic “waves” of gender empowerment.¹⁴ Drawing upon the feminist efforts of her maternal

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¹³ Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert, handwritten manuscript, 1947, as quoted in Davis, 12.
¹⁴ Teichert certainly came of age during the first wave of feminism and the “New Woman,” yet her influence extends beyond feminist efforts of that era. Iris Van der Tuin, Generational Feminism: New Materialist Introduction to a Generative Approach (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015), xix-xx, 1-3, 117.
forbearers, and demonstrating women’s capabilities to her own children, and to future viewers, her portrayals of courageous women embody Van der Tuin’s ideal.

Teichert’s vision of the West, with its strong pioneer women often allied in groups, dispels the notion of Western heroic individualism. Her perception aligns with Émile Durkheim’s collective conscience theory – that an identity can be expressed in “the totality of beliefs and sentiments common to average citizens of the same society.” Over time, Durkheim expanded the idea of collective conscience stating that it can be “‘realized’ only through individual consciousness.” Teichert’s works exemplify Durkheim’s idea. Her individual consciousness of the West, as she understood it through anecdotal histories from her maternal grandmother and her own life experiences, shaped her artistic expression, and became a part of the collective conscience in American society.

The importance of collaboration on the Western frontier can be understood through the prism of social network theory. Social network theory, as defined by physicist Mark Newman, examines a set of relationships, specifically the individual (“actor” or “node”), the connections and complex linkages among the relationships (“dyadic ties”), and the effects of social relations on human behavior. It also investigates the effects that others can have on the goal, pursuit, and achievement of an actor or entity. A type of network theory that is particularly illuminating of Teichert and her circle is known as the “ego-centric” model, where a single actor or individual is

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16 This definition of collective conscience is found in George Ritzer and Jeffrey N. Stepnisky, Encyclopedia of Social Theory (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2005), 115.
positioned at the center of a system connecting all related supports.¹⁹ At the nucleus of such alliances, one can gather information, solicit aid, exert influence, motivate, teach, and orchestrate efforts. Teichert can be viewed as a hub in a spoked wheel with spinning orbits of support, encouragement, and engagement (figure 2).²⁰ In this sense, the network arrangement is like a Conestoga wagon wheel, a recurring symbol in Teichert’s work, which was often included in the foreground of her paintings. As Teichert received emotional and monetary aid in the midst of her artistic endeavors, these supportive affiliations enabled her to pursue her dream, and to express her views on women, collaboration, and community.²¹

When viewed through these different approaches, Minerva Teichert’s life and work are much more innovative and profound than typically recognized. Teichert’s accomplishment is not simply that she “paints in” women to the Western narrative and mythology, but that she actually introduces an altogether different vision. In addition to including women within a Western tradition dominated by men and the ideal of the heroic individual, Teichert creates a sustained and powerful counter-narrative, one where women are in the foreground, where collaboration leads to success, and where community takes precedence.

**Formative Years**

Born in North Ogden, Utah, into a family often skirting the edges of poverty, Minerva Teichert was fortunate to have loving parents and an upbringing enveloped in a brood of siblings. She received her first paint box at the age of four and as a child was often found sketching Western life in her lively sphere, consisting of animals, landscapes, and Native Americans. At

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²⁰ As portrayed in this photograph, Teichert was typically the focal point among contemporaries.

²¹ Minerva K. Teichert, handwritten manuscript, 1947, quoted in Davis, 12.
the age of fourteen, as a young nanny accompanying a wealthy family on their excursion to San Francisco, she was introduced to summertime Saturday art lessons at the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art. In her early twenties, she attended prestigious art schools in Chicago and New York City. It was from her influential teacher in Manhattan, Robert Henri, that she received what is viewed as the charge that changed her life – to paint the story of her people, not just the wide and wild West, but also the saga of her people, the great Mormon story.

Instead of moving further east and pursuing additional artistic study in Europe, as was customary with ambitious and talented artists of her generation, Teichert returned home to an area of the West considered rural and rugged. There she lived and told the Western chronicle as she saw it. She married Herman A. Teichert and settled on a ranch in Idaho, then later moved to one in Wyoming. While caring for the temporal needs of family and friends, and answering to the unrelenting demands of a cattle ranch, Teichert balanced these obligations with her passion for painting religious and Western narratives. She was vibrant, colorful, and grand, much like her large-scale kaleidoscopic mural productions. Her diminutive 5’ 2” stature stood in sharp contrast to her commanding, even larger-than-life presence, and through a style that is compelling, forceful, and distinctive, she shared her immense love of life, faith, stories, and scripture.

Teichert was named after her maternal grandmother, Minerva Wade Hickman (figure 3). As a young Latter-day Saint pioneer participating in the Mormon migration movement west in

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23 Doss, “I Must Paint:’ Women Artists of the Rocky Mountain Region,” 209.

24 Teichert was awarded a scholarship to study at the Royal Academy in London, but instead took a LDS teacher, “Sister” Melvin Petersen’s, counsel to heart and returned west to marry her sweetheart. Eastwood, Letters, 8; “Autobiography of Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1937) with Annotations” in Wardle, Minerva Teichert: Pageants in Paint, 206.
1846, Hickman walked from New York to Utah and along the way buried her mother alone in the winter snow at Council Bluffs, Iowa.\textsuperscript{25} As a means of survival, Hickman became a polygamous wife of “Wild” Bill Hickman, whom she later divorced. According to family legend, she built a stone house single-handedly for her eight children, became a reputable midwife in northern Utah delivering hundreds of babies, and was also present at Teichert’s birth.\textsuperscript{26} As Teichert matured and enjoyed extended stays with her grandmother, Grandma Hickman became a significant influence, eagerly sharing her tales of fortitude and pioneer spirit.

In addition, Teichert’s mother, Mary Ella Hickman Kohlhepp (figure 4), was a woman of strength and independence, and raised a large family in rural Idaho. When Teichert’s father, Frederick John Kohlhepp, served a three-year Latter-day Saint (LDS) proselytizing mission in Switzerland and Germany and later contracted tuberculosis that lingered for years, she became the backbone and breadwinner for the family.\textsuperscript{27} Ella Kohlhepp was a suffragist and promoted the cause by distributing pamphlets, one of which she enclosed in a letter to Teichert in October, 1912.\textsuperscript{28} Kohlhepp fostered in Teichert a love for the arts and encouraged her to develop her creative talents. She gave Teichert her first box of art supplies as a child and persuaded her to pursue an artistic education.

Teichert enjoyed close relationships with her sisters, Marie, Sara, Eda, and Annalee (figure 5). She lived with her sister Eda while attending Pocatello High School. After graduating

\textsuperscript{25} Hickman’s father and brother had departed with the Mormon Battalion to California. Wardle, “The Rejoicing Women in the Art of Minerva Kohlhepp,” 21.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{27} Ella Kohlhepp managed a consignment store selling used furniture, along with marketing fruits and vegetables in town. Davis, 33.
\textsuperscript{28} Ella Kohlhepp, Mesa, AZ, to Minerva Kohlhepp, Sterling, ID, 10 October 1912, Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU. In an autobiographical essay published in the Pocatello Civic Club, Teichert attributes her mother’s inclination toward suffragist efforts to her maternal ancestral line that includes two United States presidents. Civic Club, 15 February 1917, vol. 1, no. 7: 7, Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU.
in 1906, Teichert spent her early professional years teaching at various schools in Idaho. In 1909, with her teacher’s earnings sewn into the hem of her skirt, as well as financial assistance from her mother, Teichert enrolled in the Art Institute of Chicago. For the next three years, Teichert studied in Chicago, interspersed with intervals returning to Idaho to earn funds for her continued enrollment. In 1915 Teichert was once again encouraged by her mother to go east and develop her artistic talents, this time to the Art Students League in New York City.

As Teichert ventured east for artistic study, she followed other women artists who earlier hailed from the Mormon West, such as Nina Rosabel “Rose” Hartwell (1861-1917), Mary H. Teasdel (1863-1937), Fra Dana (1874-1948), and Florence Ellen Ware (1891-1971). They sought instruction in Eastern art schools and returned to live and work in the West. Hartwell and Teasdale left Utah in the 1890s to study in Paris, France. Hartwell befriended the American expatriate artist, Mary Cassatt (1844-1926), with whom Dana also studied. Like Cassatt, Hartwell, Teasdale, and Dana are known for their tender domestic scenes of mothers and children, such as Hartwell’s Nursery Corner (c. 1910) (figure 6), Teasdale’s Mother and Child (c. 1920) (figure 7) and Dana’s Birdcage (n.d.) (figure 8). In comparison, Teichert’s subject matter does not focus on interior scenes, but rather a peopled West in the out-of-doors, creating a sharp contrast to her contemporaries’ enclosed domestic depictions.

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29 Teichert followed a common career path for young girls by attending “normal school” in preparation to become a school teacher, and taught in locations such as Landing, Rockland, Davisville, and Yale in Idaho. Wardle, Minerva Teichert: Pageants in Paint, 181.
30 Teichert’s mother embedded her hard-earned twenty-dollar gold coins into the hem of her clothes. Eastwood, Letters, 5.
31 In addition to encouraging her artistic education, Teichert’s mother was keen to dissuade her from marrying Herman A. Teichert, who was not a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. She hoped that Teichert’s sojourn east would prevent such an alliance.
33 Doss, “‘I Must Paint’: Women Artists of the Rocky Mountain Region,” 218.
A contemporary who shared an interest in depicting Western landscapes was Florence Ware, a Salt Lake City native. Teichert and Ware, sometimes considered rivals, both studied at the Art Institute of Chicago, later shared the same art agent, and on occasion were featured together in newspaper articles that aimed to promote contemporary art.\textsuperscript{34} In contrast to Teichert, Ware took artistic excursions touring Europe and North Africa, and returned to Salt Lake City, where she pursued a professional teaching career at the University of Utah.\textsuperscript{35} In addition, Ware’s style of Western landscapes is more conventional and does not include figures, but focuses exclusively on the environment, in paintings such as \textit{Dry Creek, Autumn at the Foot of the Mountains} (1930) (figure 9).

Outside of the Mormon West, compositions that hold the closest similarities to Teichert’s works are by Louise Rönnebeck (1901-1980). Rönnebeck studied at the Art Students League, and like Teichert, was instructed by Kenneth Hayes Miller and encouraged to depict subjects of everyday life. As Rönnebeck married and settled in Colorado, she came to focus on contemporary social issues and the western American region. She painted numerous murals for

\textsuperscript{34} The sensitivity of this friendship is evident in her dealer, Alice Merrill Horne’s, letters assuring Teichert that she and Ware are not competitors. On several occasions Horne mentioned Ware’s artistic activities, in letters dated 29 February 1932, (no date) August 1934, 9 April 1935, 23 December 1935, 7 February 1936, 14 February 1936, 18 February 1938, and 22 April 1938. In her letter of 29 February 1932, Horne wrote, “I do not believe Florence Ware has said anything to hurt you. I have not heard her criticise [sic] you. She may not understand your view point but I do, and all of the important men do. Forget all that is troubling you in that regard, for you \textit{will} and \textit{must} survive. To me your murals are great.” (emphasis original) Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU.\textit{The Salt Lake Tribune}, 20 May 1934; \textit{The Salt Lake Tribune}, 10 March 1935, D4; “New Acquisitions In Cache Schools,” \textit{The Salt Lake Tribune}, n.d.

\textsuperscript{35} Vern Swanson, Robert S. Olpin, Donna L. Poulton, and Janie L. Rogers, \textit{Utah Art, Utah Artists: 150 Year Survey} (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith Publisher, 2001), 81. Teichert aspired to teach at the university level, just like Ware. She made several inquiries to the art department at Brigham Young University, yet never received an invitation. On 4 September 1937 she wrote to B.F. Larsen, chairman of the art department, “When the younger ones are a little more grown up I should like to go down just one winter and help you draw at the Y. It would be a glorious adventure for me after my quiet years as a rancher’s wife.” Minerva Teichert, Cokeville, WY, to B.F. Larsen, Provo, UT, 4 September 1937 and 16 November 1937, Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU.
schools, hotels, and hospitals, and won two Works Progress Administration (WPA) commissions for post office murals: *The Fertile Land Remembers* (1938) (figure 10) in Worland, Wyoming and *The Harvest* (1940) (figure 11) in Grand Junction, Colorado. Teichert was commissioned for regional and historic murals in public spaces as well, and her style and interpretation of women on the Western frontier parallel those of Rönnebeck.³⁶

While studying at the Art Students League, the instructor who made the greatest impression on Teichert was Robert Henri. He notably supported, taught, and encouraged women artists.³⁷ From him she took a portraiture class and mastered his style of painting. She followed his admonition to garner an interest in her subject, to discern and communicate its “essence,” and to paint with simplicity. Henri advocated that once that “special thing has been said” on the canvas, then the painting is complete.³⁸ Consequently, Teichert developed a style with a loose brush stroke conveying the essence of her story and including only the necessary details. Near

³⁶ In the 1930s Teichert also participated as a WPA muralist. With the WPA’s Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) funds, the Cokeville School Board purchased Teichert’s work, *Captain Bonneville Trading with Indians*, and with additional WPA funding, Teichert was commissioned by the Rock Springs, Wyoming School District to paint the murals, *Bridger Meets Jedediah Smith at the Tetons* and *Bridger’s Yellowstone*. Two more murals depicting Western history for the Rock Springs School were *Stage Coach Holdup* and *Pony Express*. The University of Wyoming in Laramie requested her to paint *Overland Trail*, and in the same year (1936) the Hotel Utah in Salt Lake City commissioned *Jim Bridger and Brigham Young*. Wardle, *Minerva Teichert’s Murals: The Motivation for Her Large-Scale Production*, 72-74. Marian Wardle cites Barbara Melosh’s phrase, “comradely ideal,” which describes a vocabulary common in New Deal murals. Melosh sees this “comradely ideal” in Rönnebeck’s man and woman, who are ostensibly equal as they sit side by side, yet subtleties, such as his size and his arm around her, reveal his privileged position. Melosh overstates her “comradely ideal” here, as Rönnebeck distinguishes her pioneer woman through devices such as posture, color, and placement. Rönnebeck’s woman appears in dramatic red, is highlighted by the position of the horses in the background, sits forward of the man in a more proactive stance, and is literally holding the future of the soon-to-be-civilized West. Wardle notes that Melosh’s “comradely ideal” is absent in Teichert’s pioneer murals, too, as her women are the distinguished ones. Wardle, “The Rejoicing Women in the Art of Minerva Teichert,” 16.


³⁸ This instruction is included in a letter from Henri to his portraiture class at the Art Students League, when Teichert was one of his students. The counsel was later published in Robert Henri, *The Art Spirit* (Philadelphia and London: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1930), 10.
the end of her training at the Art Students League, Henri asked Teichert if anyone had ever painted the great Mormon story. He was not aware that artists had taken their brushes and palettes to the task. Whether Teichert saw or knew of the nineteenth-century panoramas of the West is unlikely, and in response to Henri’s query about whether the great Mormon saga had been illustrated, she replied, “Not to suit me.” Three Latter-day Saint artists, Danquart (Daniel) Anthon Weggeland (1827-1918), George M. Ottinger (1833-1917), and Carl Christian Anton (C.C.A.) Christensen (1831-1912), had preceded Teichert and depicted the great Mormon migration during the nineteenth-century. Teichert was correct in her estimation that prior depictions did not capture her conceptualization. While their subject matter was undoubtedly similar, their style and sensitivity, especially their underlying vision, were very different.

As Danquart Weggeland crossed the plains to the Salt Lake Valley in 1861, he documented the American Western landscape with his paintbrush. He originated from Norway, received art instruction at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen, and while in Europe met fellow LDS artist, C.C.A. Christensen. Alice Merrill Horne, a distinguished Utah arts patron, considered him the father of Utah art because of his many scenes of pioneer life, such as* Handcart Company* (1908) (figure 12). Here Weggeland offers a realistic view of the journey, where figures are engaged with one another in various activities, yet in disparate, not communal,

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39 Minerva K. Teichert, handwritten manuscript, 1947, quoted in Davis, 39.
40 Davis, 39.
groupings scattered in the countryside. Amongst its inhabitants, the land looms large with ominous clouds, rolling hills, and uneven terrain.

Another artist to sketch his way as he traveled westward was George M. Ottinger, who escorted his mother in a Mormon pioneer company in 1858. He originated from Pennsylvania and studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Developing an interest in illustrating the vast outdoors, he also studied with artists of the Hudson River School, a group that emphasized the exploration and portrayal of the uncultivated American landscape. He later became a teacher at the University of Utah, and has been cited as the first artist to specialize in Utah landscapes, depicting such works as Away Away to the Mountain Dell: The Valley of the Free Immigrant Train (1897) (figure 13). In this painting, the wide panoramic expanse of nature fills the canvas, emphasizing the Western region and reducing the pioneer figures and Conestoga wagons to miniature forms. The narrative is about the grandeur of the land, with its endless vista of dry, barren dusty plains, along with the orderly, unbroken procession of well-dressed travelers.

C.C.A Christensen, originally from Denmark, crossed the plains with a handcart in 1857, and is quoted as saying his happiest years were painting with Weggeland. In focusing upon his favorite themes of pioneers and wheat fields, he produced works such as Handcart Pioneers (1900) (figure 14). In addition, he produced twenty-three scenes comprising his significant Mormon Panorama, a visual chronicle of the principal events in Mormon history. In an effort to construct his compositions with historical accuracy, Christensen drew upon his own personal

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44 Leek, 21.
45 Ibid.
47 Heaton, 5.
48 Horne, 29; Heaton, 11-13; all but one of the Mormon Panorama paintings survive.
experiences as well as the stories of many LDS Saints.⁴⁹ As he painted his historical narratives, he included deliberate, linear details set in grand, expansive landscapes. For example, in the eighteenth panel of his Mormon Panorama, also known as Crossing the Mississippi on the Ice (c. 1878) (figure 15), Christensen portrays in characteristic detail the winding wagon train, which measures small in comparison with its setting, as it traverses the serene, snow-covered tributary broadened further by blue sky. The landscape once again overshadows the human event, minimizing people in the midst of nature’s grandeur.

These monumental scenes emphasizing landscape, which Christensen and his Latter-day Saint contemporaries promoted, were not unlike other illustrations advanced during the nineteenth-century. As history, literature, and art recorded development of the American West, nature’s immense scale and splendor loomed foremost in early narrative and visual accounts. Images of the romantic sublime became a common vehicle for documenting scouting expeditions, portraying Western settlement, and on occasion addressing national moral, spiritual, and historical concerns. Works such as Albert Bierstadt’s In the Sierras (1868) (figure 16) and Thomas Moran’s The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone (1893-1901) (figure 17) are emblematic of such accounts, with the majesty of nature spanning as far as the eye can see, and mankind, if present at all, in diminutive and secondary form.

As the Western frontier became more of a destination for explorers, settlers, and free spirits, it became romanticized and celebrated as a place of conquest.⁵⁰ The collective conscience of the American West came to be associated with predominately masculine images, so described

⁵⁰ Vera Norwood and Janice Monk, eds., The Desert is No Lady: Southwestern Landscapes in Women’s Writing and Art (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 5.
by historian Katherine Morrissey as “cowboys and soldiers, gold miners and fur traders – the cast of characters that people[d] the stereotypical West [wa]s male dominated.” This masculine ideal governs much of nineteenth-century Western art, as illustrated by Frederic Remington’s *A Dash for the Timber* (1889) (figure 18), Charles M. Russell’s *Battle of Belly River* (1905) (figure 19), and N.C. Wyeth’s *The Great Train Robbery* (1912) (figure 20), which are representative of this collective imagination. As the West developed an identity during the late nineteenth-century, it espoused explicitly masculine traits such as independence, individualism, conquest, and Manifest Destiny. Singular and heroic, man and his horse – the cowboy – became the iconic image. The norms and values of the American West evident in the mythologizing art and literature by the early twentieth-century, represented an already emerging nostalgia for a passing era, and reflect a collective conscience that is overwhelmingly masculine in orientation and outlook.

Historians Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson acknowledge that tales of the West long eclipsed, ignored, underplayed, or edited women out of this taming of the frontier narrative. But there were women “in them thar [sic] hills,” and not just stereotypes (refined ladies, helpmates, and “bad women”), but individuals of all social classes and ethnic groups. While Frederick Jackson Turner persuasively argued in his famous 1893 address, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” that available tracts of land in the West had been conquered,

he spoke of the frontier in gendered terms and fostered the notion that the West was a domain “of real men who dominated other men and nature.”

His proclamation became definitive in the following decades, and his influence so pervasive that the historian, Patricia Nelson Limerick, notes that “By the 1970s, it was commonly recognized that Turner-style history simply left women out.” She continues with the observation, “Exclude women from Western history, and unreality sets in. Restore them, and the Western drama gains a fully human cast of characters – males and females whose urges, needs, failings, and conflicts we can recognize and even share.”

Turner’s characterization of the American West promulgated the perception of a male-conquered territory, which prevailed in art and literature into the twentieth-century.

In reality, individuals who ventured into the American frontier were different Western figures, they were men, women, and children. In addition, they were able to succeed in the establishment and settlement of communities through their collective efforts of working together. The historians Robert V. Hine and John Mack Faragher note that rural life west of the Mississippi River was filled with hard work and isolation, and Mormon communities were more effective in their settlements, which were practical and communal. The historian and writer Wallace Stegner notes, the Mormon people were “one of the principal forces in the settlement of


54 Limerick, 48-49.

55 Ibid, 52.

The great Mormon migration took place primarily between the years 1846 and 1850, as approximately 11,000 men, women, and children traveled in groups, or companies, traversing the plains westward from the city of Nauvoo, Illinois to what has become known as the Salt Lake Valley, Utah. Early years in the LDS Church were characterized by challenges associated with establishing communities, taming the land, suffering illnesses, caring for the disadvantaged, enduring harsh weather conditions and social opposition, and sharing the LDS faith both near and abroad.

As Latter-day Saint men and women cultivated the land, they worked side-by-side, building homes, sowing and harvesting crops, shoveling irrigation ditches, governing herds, and creating schools. Early on they struggled to survive and initially were mindful of little else. In time, as the land was developed, the Victorian “cult of true womanhood” became ascendant, and the responsibilities among men and women became distinct and different in the public and private spheres. In addition, men within the LDS Church were given greater ecclesiastical authority than women and were called to serve in substantial clerical assignments both within the Church organization and on proselytizing missions around the world. As a result, LDS women faced the demands of civilizing the frontier with less of a male presence, and a few adapted to a male absence created by polygamy. In these instances, LDS women developed domestic and


59 Ibid.

professional skills that led to their becoming virtually independent in far greater numbers than anywhere else in the West.\textsuperscript{61} About the Mormon pioneer women, Stegner records that as Mormon women ventured westward, they endured hard physical obstacles and illness, gave birth in difficult conditions, walked ten to fifteen miles per day, drove ox teams, rescued stray oxen, and demonstrated that they were capable and indefatigable.\textsuperscript{62} He declares, “Their women were incredible.”\textsuperscript{63} LDS women, although focused on the success of Mormonism, experienced more independence than their Eastern counterparts.\textsuperscript{64} They created their own newspaper and humanitarian organization, became energetic suffragists, participated in academic and economic activities, and were considered to be doing just as much as men.\textsuperscript{65} This history and its legacy found their way into Minerva Teichert’s life and art.

Teichert’s Western reality figured a mother and grandmother, who themselves were tenacious Mormon pioneer women and to whom Teichert is closely tied. They were products of the latter half of the nineteenth-century, when courageous women were settling the West and modeling early Latter-day Saint Church culture. Minerva Wade Hickman supported herself and eight children as a midwife after divorcing “Wild” Bill Hickman, and Mary Ella Hickman Kohlhepp similarly raised and supported her large family during her husband’s long-term debilitating illness. Teichert’s formative childhood experiences in the West and her confidence

\textsuperscript{61} Beecher and Anderson, viii.
\textsuperscript{62} Stegner, 87, 176-177.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid, 13.
\textsuperscript{64} Beecher and Anderson, viii-ix.
\textsuperscript{65} The periodical, \textit{Woman’s Exponent}, was produced from 1872 to 1914. The LDS women’s humanitarian organization, the Relief Society, has operated from 1842-44 and 1867-current day. Under its auspices, women managed granaries, raised silk worms, trained as nurses, and improved hospital programs. Several LDS women graduated from the Women’s Medical College at Philadelphia in 1877, while other LDS women attended art and music schools in Eastern states and abroad. In 1869 when the University of Deseret reopened, of the 223 students, 103 were women. Women in Utah received the right to vote in 1870. They were admitted to the Utah Bar in 1872, and were the first to have the right to support themselves as clerks, telegraph operators, etc. Arrington and Bitton, 221-229; Judith Rasmussen Dushku, “Feminists,” and Cheryll Lynn May, “Charitable Sisters,” in \textit{Mormon Sisters: Women in Early Utah}, ed. Claudia Bushman (Cambridge: Emmeline Press Limited, 1976), 178-184 and 225-233.
as a youthful art student in the Eastern United States, far from the familiar wide places of home, reflect a Western sensitivity, an instinct for independence, individuality, and equality. These qualities found expression in her compositions. The art historian Erika Doss observes, “paintings produced by Western women artists like Minerva Teichert during the later nineteenth-century and the first half of the modern era suggest a deeper and more critical analysis not only of American Western art but of our own abiding mythical construction of the American West.”

Teichert’s individual consciousness poses a striking variation to the thoroughly masculine conception that dominated Western perceptions.

Teichert’s contribution is not only a contrast to the dominant collective conscience of the Western masculine ideal represented in the canonical art and lore of the “wild West” – it is a dramatic re-imagination of the Western consciousness, one in which women and men not only labor together, as active, powerful agents, but also one where women are often in the foreground, in heroic or energetic postures, while men are represented in secondary stations in the periphery. Her work generates a subtle recalibration of the Western collective conscience, one in which women are the primary actors in a sphere where cooperation and community are necessary for success.

**Female Communities in Life**

The communities or networks in Minerva Teichert’s life were comprised of the women surrounding her. They strengthened and supported her, if not physically then figuratively, throughout each phase of her artistic development. These bonds not only nurtured Teichert in her pursuit of education and in her dream of becoming an artist, but they also formed a tight community of women upon which she could rely. Within her family, she was embraced by strong connections to her grandmother, mother, sisters, and daughter. During her educational

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years and beyond, she forged relationships with female friends who encouraged and assisted in
the creation of her art. Her professional years of marketing her paintings were made possible
primarily by the assistance of confident, well-connected women. These communities of women
that encircled Teichert provided emotional and financial support, which enabled her to create her
unique vision of the West. This assistance is evident and documented in an abundance of
correspondence spanning her lifetime.

Letters from her mother are filled with encouragement for Teichert’s artistic capacity,
especially during her years at the Art Students League. In a letter dated March 2, 1916, Ella
Kohlhepp wrote, “I have many friends who extole [sic] your art in fact the whole town is ready
to do you honor as an artist – the teachers have begged me just for one little painting to take
home and show their friends.”67 And in the postscript of another letter adds, “Ps – The church
looks so bare I would like you to copy [sic] some large bible picture for it on canvas or one in
water colors.”68 On occasion Kohlhepp offered her advice, “I do wish you would learn to make
eyes and features that people could have in their parlors. You could get plenty [sic] of work of
that kind out west – you cærtanly [sic] express character and May God inspire your work and be
with you.” (emphasis original)69 Her counsel was intended to help her daughter seize
opportunities and succeed in the Western sphere with which she was so familiar. At a time when
Teichert’s father was terribly ill and money was so scarce that tuition was in question, her

mother encouraged her to stay in school and wrote, “so dont [sic] think of giving up.”

Kohlhepp routinely forwarded funds from her secondhand store, and wrote of taking out her first bank loan in order to assist Teichert with her education at the Art Students League.

Teichert’s sisters wrote her regularly and provided another pillar of security and support. Her younger sister Sara especially sent well wishes along with her employment earnings during Teichert’s enrollment at the Art Students League. Shortly after her sister’s arrival in New York City, Sara sent a missive dated June 21, 1915, which concludes, “Wishing you success and happiness, … P.S. Please find $10.00 herewith.” In a later letter she writes, “Please find enclosed herewith money order of $35.00. With kindest regards from home I remain Your Loving Sister Sara Kohlhepp.”

Letters during the course of Teichert’s enrollment at the Art Students League contain steady funds from Sara.

Teichert’s other sisters, Marie, Annalee, and Eda, along with her sisters-in-law, Agnes and Clara, expressed their support as well, often with praise for her talents and concern for her well-being. Her older sister Marie wrote, “Your picture of Christ is one of our main topics of conversation. it [sic] holds perpetual interest.” And several years later she penned, “Have been thinking of you a great deal since I come [sic] back especialy [sic] when I look at your picture, it certainly looks fine on my dull green wall with the light shinging [sic] threw [sic] the cream

74 Clara Teichert, Sterling, ID, to Minerva Teichert, American Falls, ID, 28 February 1918, Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU.
curtains.”

Prior to a visit, her sister Annalee asked if Teichert would bring two paintings, *Gypsie* and *Scene Along Snake River*, and adds, “I just think every thing of them, and feel lost without them on the walls.” That same year her sister Eda asked for works by Teichert with the sentiment, “Oh! Yes I would as so or rather have a nice landscape & some decorative picture in oil for that water color of mine. I am in no hurry so long as I get it. As they haven’t even started the house yet.” As the women in her family requested paintings to enhance their lives, their lavish praise encouraged Teichert to develop and share her talents.

A niece, Fay Driscoll, daughter-in-law of Agnes Teichert Driscoll, wrote a thank you letter for a portrait she and her husband received, “Buster got his portrait and has it hung in our new home. We are both very glad for it and hoped all the time that it would be ours.” Another niece, Biddie, daughter of Clara Teichert Driscoll, expressed joy over having one of Teichert’s paintings to beautify her space,

First of all Minerva I want to thank you for the beautiful painting of the Geraniums [sic]. I was so pleased with them I just danced. I couldn’t [sic] wish for anything that would have pleased me more, they are so natural. ... Thank you a million times [sic] I will think of you every time I look at them and it will be a very fine thought Minerva as I surely do admire you and wish I lived nearer you [sic] there are so many things you say [sic] gives one a better and different outlook on life.

For the women folk in her family, Teichert’s art adorned and embellished the walls of their simple homes, which at times were new, or as they saw them, in need of decoration and

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77 Annalee Kohlhepp Gorman, Salt Lake City, UT, to Minerva Teichert, American Falls, ID, 1 March 1918, Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU.
79 Fay Driscoll (Mrs. M.A. Driscoll, Jr.), Aberdeen, ID, to Minerva Teichert, Cokeville, WY, 6 June 1927, Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU.
80 Bertha (Biddie) Driscoll, Sterling, ID, to Minerva Teichert, Cokeville, WY, 18 March 1934, Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU.
presentation. In addition, as the women viewed her art, they were frequently uplifted by Teichert and remembered her with fondness, further creating strong female bonds. Benefitting from their encouragement and in turn fulfilling their decorating needs, Teichert and the circle of women in her family experienced a symbiotic and nurturing network, demonstrating the close-knit relationships among women on the frontier.

On one occasion Teichert received a special request to document a formidable woman in her maternal family line. Teichert’s aunt, Sarah Maria Hickman Frances (also known as Aunt Sally), sent a piece of her great-grandmother’s linen wedding dress, once sky-blue but faded to old ivory, stamped with red birds. Aunt Sally wrote, “it must be over, 100, years old, now I will send it to you if you will make me a sketch of it, and you can keep the piece.”81 The fragment of fabric became “immortalized” on a woman’s dress in one of Teichert’s pioneer paintings, most likely Zion Ho! (Handcart Pioneers) (c. 1935) (figure 21).82

In a valiant, confident, and triumphant posture, the woman wearing the dress patterned with birds-of-paradise in Zion Ho! (Handcart Pioneers) (c. 1935) (figure 21) takes her place, central to the composition and with certainty on the Western frontier. She, along with her husband and son, have reached the Salt Lake Valley. The meaningfulness of the bird-of-paradise design and the history of Teichert’s maternal ancestors enable the exuberant figure to suggest that her accomplishment on the Western frontier is connected to the contributions of other women. She stands taller than her husband and son, and her jubilant, outstretched arm, her direct countenance, delineated description, and flowing, red Paisley shawl, serve to affirm her

81 Sarah Maria Hickman Frances, Inkom, ID, to Minerva Teichert, Cokeville, WY, 15 September 1936, Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU.
82 Information attached to this correspondence states that the fabric belonged to Mary Thayer, yet this assertion conflicts with Robert O. Davis’ account that the dress was worn by Sara Bundy Wade, Minerva’s great-grandmother, who died at Council Bluffs, IA in 1846. Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU; Davis, 39.
significance. This sharing of a family heirloom indicates an ongoing connection among Teichert’s women family members, and Teichert herself becoming a keeper of feminine family treasure. Teichert in turn shares this strong female connection with younger generations who witness this moment of celebration.

Various family members also supported Teichert by posing as models in her paintings. Her sister Sara was the model in Portrait of Sara Kohlhepp (1917) (figure 22). Her daughter, Laurie Teichert Eastwood, was the subject for Gypsy Dancer (c. 1940) (figure 23), Laurie in Lorelei Dress (1940), Portrait in Pink (n.d.), and some years later for Carmen (1948) (figure 24). Teichert’s four daughters-in-law can also be found in The Women of Utah Saving the Day (1959); Teichert could not assemble them all together, so she painted them “that way on my own.” (emphasis original) In order to paint her multitude of Western scenes in remote Cokeville, Wyoming, Teichert needed to draw upon the familiar faces of family who encircled her.

As they ran in from the fields through the house, children and grandchildren would be apprehended. Teichert’s granddaughters, Jeanette Eastwood Ensley and Marian Eastwood Wardle, reminisce of being models for their grandmother’s murals. Ensley remembers, “She used me as a model. She usually gave the story as she was going along – what was happening here and there. I modeled as a pioneer girl once. I felt honored to be part of the painting.” Her grandchildren even recognized that what she was doing was extraordinary. Wardle recalls that as

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83 Marian Wardle, Minerva Teichert: Pageants in Paint, 3; Minerva Teichert, Cokeville, WY, to Eastwood Family, no location, 28 December 1958, Laurie Teichert Eastwood and Marian Wardle Papers, Special Collections, BYU; Eastwood, Letters, 180-181.
84 Minerva Teichert, Cokeville, WY, to Eastwood Family, no location, 21 April 1959, Laurie Teichert Eastwood and Marian Wardle Papers, Special Collections, BYU; Eastwood, Letters, 183.
86 Jeanette Eastwood Ensley interview by Robert O. Davis, 26 March 1987, Davis, 41.
Teichert would paint, she was “always talking” and “lots of times it was quoting Isaiah.” As family members were held captive posing their bodies, Teichert would paint, quote scripture, and share frontier stories, imbuing her family with her admiration and love for the LDS teachings and people who had settled the West. In this way, Teichert was extending her awareness of women, appreciation for the heroic figures who settled the Western frontier, and conveying the conviction that future generations were a continuation of such valiance.

One painting in particular where grandchildren posed as models is *A Refreshing Respite from the Wagon Train* (1955) (figure 25), which reveals a company of women and children enjoying a reprieve by the water’s edge. The women are featured prominently, as they stand taller than any other figure, one in particular fashioning the ubiquitous red, Paisley shawl, while young men occupy the background. The women hold hierarchies of importance, as they break the horizontal registers of skyline, wagons and wheels. The Conestoga wagon wheels are featured prominently, in even more detail than the wagons themselves. The spokes tied to the axis seem to suggest a combined and connected effort as the progression travels forward, an effort where a collection of women working together are central to the movement’s success.

Several women relatives also contributed to Teichert’s progress by sharing their artistic talents. One sister-in-law, Eulalie Page Teichert, who was married to Herman’s brother, Louis, could have been more than a rival of many things, including better baked rolls. Eulalie attended the Art Institute of Chicago while Teichert was there, and was keen to apply her aesthetic skills in the small, rural town of Cokeville. On occasion she assisted Teichert by painting and also by

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87 Gardner, “Painting the Mormon Story.”
88 Ibid.
89 Conversation with Theresa Teichert Balser [Teichert’s granddaughter] on 25 July 2015 in Cokeville, WY.
90 Conversation with Marian Wardle on 17 November 2015.
offering “very good criticisms” on Teichert’s works in progress. A daughter-in-law, Shirley Allen Teichert, was also an eager and reliable assistant, filling in the borders of her enormous murals, among other contributions.

In addition to benevolent familial relationships, Teichert enjoyed a sympathetic network of associates who encouraged the development of her talents and successes. Teichert’s life was enriched with compassionate and supportive friends during her high school years, art schools days, and during her residence in Cokeville. Notably these influences were not limited to when they were together but extended over distance and years.

One high school friend in particular, Eva Kasiska, became Teichert’s life-long and close friend, supporting her with encouragement and gifts (figure 26). Kasiska was wealthy and well-traveled, and collected treasures from her international adventures, which she bestowed upon Teichert, including a red, Paisley shawl. Correspondence from Eva shares a mindfulness and enthusiasm for Teichert and her endeavors. On one occasion, Eva penned the thought, “I think that portrait of Mrs. Wade’s the most extra-ordinary [sic] one I’ve seen in many years. It is oh, so good!”

In a letter dated 22 November 1922, when Teichert was in the midst of raising a young family and living on the family ranch in the Fort Hall Bottoms on the Snake River in Idaho, Kasiska wrote,

My dear Minerva – I’ve never been made happier in my life, than I was yesterday when I received the picture you sent me. It is absolutely exquisite, and you are a true colourist [sic]! … Some day when your pictures hang in famous halls, how

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91 Laurie Teichert Eastwood, “My Mother – Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert,” in Rich in Story, Great in Faith: The Art of Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert, Laurie Teichert Eastwood and Robert O. Davis, (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1988), 6; Minerva Teichert, Cokeville, WY, to Laurie Teichert Eastwood, no location, 5 January 1947 and 4 April 1950, Laurie Teichert Eastwood and Marian Wardle Papers. Arts and Communications, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University; Eastwood, Letters, 97, 132.

92 Wardle, Minerva Teichert: Pageants in Paint, 41.

93 Eva Kasiska, no location, to Minerva Teichert, no location, no date (dated Sunday), Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU.
proud I am going to be to say that I know and love the artist, and have in my possession a wonderful study of nature breathing its very spirit. . . 

Not only was Eva eager to show her affection for Teichert, but she also desired to share her confidence in Teichert’s talents, which she believed would someday be recognized. Her support was significant in the rural West.

In 1905 the year prior to her high school graduation, Teichert met a contemporary in Salt Lake City who loved art and desired also to go to the Art Institute of Chicago. Rosa Birch Gold reached Chicago first, and two years later when Teichert arrived, they became friends and roommates. While they were students at the Art Institute of Chicago, Gold gave Teichert advice about her work, which is recorded in a letter as she remembers Gold’s counsel,

Do you remember the foolish little water color sketches I took with me, the ones my friends said would ‘knock ‘em cold’ back there? You didn’t encourage me to show them at the Institute. I thot [sic] you rather frowned upon them. One day you went especially early so I sneaked them down to Mr. Oswold’s water color class, then when he came near I showed them to the master. … He was very reserved, almost in horror. … I blurted out ‘what’s the matter with my work?’ He said only ‘finicky.’

Determinedly Teichert went on to investigate the meaning of “finicky” and reports that with the suggestion, her art improved. Teichert credits Gold with giving her good advice, paving the way for her warm regard at the Institute, and the two remained friends for years. While at the Art Institute of Chicago, Teichert forged other supportive friendships. One friend in particular, Kate
Degenkolbe, corresponded over the years, missing her dynamic personality and longing to be neighbors.\textsuperscript{97}

At every phase of her life and career, Teichert experienced strong support from female friends. In 1915 she matriculated at the Art Students League in New York City, and gained the favor of colleagues and classmates (figure 27). She resided in an apartment two blocks away from the homestead for LDS missionaries, and in her autobiography writes of “four of us Western girls” in attendance at the LDS chapel in Harlem. Her roommate, Marie Clark Miller, was a native of Utah and studied at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts at Carnegie Hall.\textsuperscript{98} Several years later when the two were back in the West, Miller wrote, “I am so glad to hear of your success – you must surely be happy to have your state appreciate you. I should love to see your work - & I do hope you get your heart’s desire – that is to be able to get off by yourself and paint.”\textsuperscript{99} After they both married, Miller inquired, “Are you doing much painting? I find time to paint some & of course I’m trying to keep up my Dramatic Art.”\textsuperscript{100} Miller was enthusiastic to learn of Teichert’s achievement and hoped that she was able to pursue her passion, fully aware of the balancing act between motherhood and other personal interests. Miller could commiserate, and this kind of encouragement was meaningful to Teichert, who likewise was juggling life along with her enthusiasm for painting. Even beyond Western territory and while a student in Henri’s portraiture class at the Art Students League, Teichert befriended a classmate who was one of New York City’s prominent

\textsuperscript{97} Kate Degenkolbe, Wooddale, IL, to Minerva Teichert, Sterling, ID, 17 March 1919, Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU.
\textsuperscript{98} “Salt Lakers in Gotham,” \textit{The Deseret Evening News}, 13 May 1916, section 2, 5.
\textsuperscript{99} Marie Clark Miller, no location, to Minerva Kohlhepp, American Falls, ID, forwarded to c/o Dr. Minnie Howard in Pocatello, ID, no date but probably 1917, Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU.
\textsuperscript{100} Marie Clark Miller, Salt Lake City, UT, to Minerva Teichert, Sterling, ID, 18 January 1918, Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU.
Jewish women. Louise Waterman Wise founded the Women’s Division of the Jewish Congress and was the wife of Rabbi Stephen Samuel Wise, a well-known proponent of the Zionist movement and leader who founded the American Jewish Congress. Teichert, in her self-assured manner, attracted strong women into her life, women like Wise. In a letter to her mother, Teichert wrote about her affection for Mrs. Wise,

She chose me as a friend last summer and we became fast friends before I knew who she was. Day before yesterday, she invited me to go to Carnegie Hall to hear her husband talk on woman’s suffrage. I was of course invited into their box… Of all the men I have heard Rabbi Wise far outdistanced them all. Oh I wish you could have heard him.¹⁰¹

Such an association with Wise strengthened Teichert’s belief in the contribution of confident women and also inspired her to paint *Esther Before the King* (1916) (figure 28), other Old Testament paintings, and *Immigrants to New York City (Jewish Refugees)* (1938) (figure 29), which feature valiant women.¹⁰²

Other New York City friends offered words of encouragement. In the middle of Teichert’s academic program, Frances Hahn sent a letter saying that the girls in New York missed her during the holidays, and another one of those girls in New York, Zelma Peterson Beardall wrote, “It always makes me happy to hear of the success you are meeting with. I noticed in the paper a short time ago that they had made you monitor at school. Fine, just keep up the good work… With love and best wishes for your success.”¹⁰³ Years later Peterson wrote, “I feel proud to think I have known you and I want to congratulate you on the wonderful things

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you have done. With your talent and ability I am sure you will go far.”

Peterson was pleased that someone in her group of women had distinguished herself, and she expressed confidence in Teichert’s future accomplishments.

Years later the support that Teichert received from her friends in isolated Cokeville, Wyoming was not so much in the form of correspondence, as it was with actual assistance in creating her paintings. As with her family, nearby residents in the town routinely served as models in her compositions. She was in need of human figures to accurately depict anatomy and sought willing female friends and neighbors. In *Washday on the Plains* (1938) (figure 30), the women on the right are Mary “Mamie” Peery Curtis and her daughter, Betty Curtis, from Cokeville. Other residents, Lillie Bruce and Jane Nate, pose as the younger girls in sunbonnets. In *Cokeville Wyoming Ward Relief Society Quilters* (1932) (figure 31), the tall central figure is modeled by Mrs. Dean, who lived down the street from Teichert. Helen Stoner Day, a Cokeville resident from birth, modeled for the two standing Native American figures in *Indian Basket and Pottery Makers* (c. 1935) (figure 32). Other Cokeville townspeople, Dorothy Somsen, posed for *Sacagawea* (also called *Dorothy Somsen as Sacagawea and Bird Woman*) (1940), and Barbara Dayton Perry and Carol Dayton Peterson modeled for the young native women on horseback in the mural, *Moving South* (also known as *Squaws* or *The Squaws*) (1949) (figure 33). Teichert also enlisted the talents of her neighbors, Zelma Peterson, Springville, UT to Minerva Teichert, Cokeville, WY, 12 May 1938, Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU.

105 Wardle, *Minerva Teichert: Pageants in Paint*, 225 – footnote 80 (possible to see original source at MCHA?).

106 Mrs. Dean lived a few houses away from Teichert on Collett Avenue in Cokeville, WY.

107 Mark Day, email message to Marian Wardle, 2 January 2008 (in possession of author).

108 Wardle, *Minerva Teichert: Pageants in Paint*, 190, 225 (footnote 85); Barbara Dayton Perry and Carol Dayton Peterson related that they posed for Teichert as she painted in her living room, and were surprised and delighted to receive a small tin full of coins for their efforts. Conversations with
such as “Mamie” Peery Curtis and Lou Ryan, to assist with painting in the borders and backgrounds of her large-scale murals.\textsuperscript{109} Like the figures in her paintings, these women comprising Teichert’s community in Cokeville were actively engaged in their own lives, as well as enthusiastically supportive of her artistic goals.

The women in Teichert’s life also shared helpful props, which became instrumental in her compositions. “Mamie” Peery Curtis shared her Native American blankets with Teichert, which were used as a reference in the paintings, \textit{Weavers} (c. 1935) (figure 34) and \textit{Rug Merchants} (c. 1936).\textsuperscript{110} The particularity of this detail adds credibility to the sweeping themes and contrasting vision of the West evident in Teichert’s art. Women were eager to be supportive of Teichert and assist with her documentation of creating noble, courageous women of the frontier. They embodied and modeled Teichert’s themes of the feminine and the communal in the American West.

While assistance from family and friends occurred more within the boundaries of her home, or private sphere, Teichert had associates who prompted her to expand her horizons into the public realm. In 1902 as a new student at Pocatello High School, Teichert worked for her art teacher and local artist, Isabel Ballantyne West, in exchange for room and board. Two weeks into the school term, West moved to Montpelier, Idaho, but she had already encouraged Teichert’s artistic talents.\textsuperscript{111} In an autobiographical essay that appeared in \textit{Civic Club}, a Pocatello

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\textsuperscript{109} Eastwood, \textit{Letters}, 14; Conversation with Lou Ryan, friend to Teichert, on 25 July 2015 in Cokeville, WY.


periodical, Teichert says of her early mentor, “She was always a great help in my ambition.”

During this era, if a woman pursued her interests outside of the domestic sphere, it often took other women and their encouragement to negotiate obstacles and overcome barriers. West was one such supportive voice. Fifteen years later, after Teichert had completed her studies at the Art Students League, a note from West in San Francisco reached Teichert in Pocatello, Idaho,

My dear Minerva Just [sic] received the article sent me of the history of your success and you do not know how pleased I was to hear of it, and you surely deserve all for I know how hard you have worked for it, and am very very happy to think you have succeeded so well how I would like to see some of your work, and perhaps I will someday. … have [sic] always said you would make a name for yourself, and am delighted, wishing [sic] you still further success, and with much love, Mrs. Isabel West (emphasis original)

West was congratulating Teichert on pursuing her talents and succeeding in “making a name for herself” to a public audience. Her well wishes urged Teichert onward.

When Teichert received this card, she was renting a room in Pocatello from Minnie F. Howard, a mother, physician, and the Idaho State Art Chairman (figure 35). Again, Teichert came under the influence of a strong woman, who was making contributions in her community. Enthusiastic about welcoming the artist into her home and mentoring her, Howard wrote,

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114 Minnie F. Howard, Pocatello, ID, to Minerva Kohlhepp, American Falls, ID, 2 February 1917, Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU. Howard’s letter states that Teichert’s accommodations would initially be free of charge, and when summer began she could occupy a “nice sunny room” and “pay for it with painting.” Minnie F. Howard was a physician and state arts administrator. She practiced medicine with her husband, and with the birth of her second child became more involved in family and civic affairs in Pocatello, ID. She served in a variety of capacities on committees such as the Women’s Study League and City & County Welfare Board, assisted with the establishment of the Pocatello Public Library, and most notably was the first president of the Pocatello Women’s Republican Club and the Idaho State Arts Chairman. Eli M. Oboler Library, Idaho State University, www.isu.edu/library/special/mc001b.htm, accessed 24 November 2015.
… we must know each other better. … I know some good things and for your own perpetuating of truths I feel like I want to endow you with every quality that I have tried out and found true. I have from your first visit here been possessed with the wish to give you all I have in this way, not that you need it, but that it will reinforce you. And I have wished to have you in the house so that I could talk to you and with you and we would read and think a little together.  

Teichert felt the need to repay the debt to her mother and sisters for her studies in New York, and was commissioned by Howard to paint Idaho landscapes into the frieze of her dining room.  

Howard was also instrumental in setting up a portrait studio for Teichert in her home, endorsing the young artist’s talents in the local newspaper, and securing patrons. She instigated Teichert’s portraiture business in Pocatello with subjects from her own family. In February of 1917 she wrote to the artist in advance of her arrival and enclosed $50.00 for “a portrait of some one [sic] of our family if you will be so good as to accept any of us as sitters. … this family must have a [Minerva Teichert] portrait. I have been since your first visit here saving up this little hoard which I enclose.” Howard had been saving money for a portrait by Teichert, thus conveying confidence in her talents. Howard’s praise of the emerging artist’s ability is also evident in her letters. In one of her frequent reports to her husband, W.F. Howard, she records, “All went to bed again but Minerva went away tonight. She said she must sleep or else couldn’t make Mr. Reed’s portrait. It is going to be very good.” Howard eagerly praised Teichert to her husband, a measure of extending approval for the young artist’s work. If Teichert was going to

116 Wardle, Minerva Teichert: Pageants in Paint, 28, 185.
succeed, it meant female voices from her network extending their support into the male dominated realm.

After Teichert moved away and married in 1917, Howard continued to encourage her, this time to enter her paintings in exhibitions and to extend her success into the public sphere. Howard wrote, “I do so love your brother’s picture. I never tire of looking at it. That is a prize picture, and I would love to see it in a competitive exhibit. It is a prize picture.”\textsuperscript{120} Howard desired for Teichert’s talent to be recognized and awarded by the public, a perceived measure of success. She anticipated enthusiasm for Teichert’s work, and wrote about further reactions to a particular portrait in her possession,

Even you have never thought it as pretty as I think you should, and Mrs. Welles who is specialist on House Beautiful and such notions and things, thinks it is the prettiest thing she ever saw, … [wonders if the portrait will be given to the sitter] … I have never thought before of leaving it to anyone, I only thought of possessing it myself. So I seem to be making progress for you. When we (you) once get a start, that kind of contagion will go of its own momentum.\textsuperscript{121}

By including the reaction of a woman who was a specialist in home decorating, Howard gave Teichert evidence of public enthusiasm for her work. In addition, she desired for Teichert a “kind of contagion” that would engender a greater, and more public, zeal for her work. During these years, Teichert’s mother also received a letter from a woman with the Senate Chamber of the State of Idaho, requesting at least one of Teichert’s paintings to be included in an exhibition. She implored, “I hope she … will send if only one canvas – she is a credit to the State [sic] I am quite sure there is no one her equal here – I of course have nothing to do with the exhibit and am too

\textsuperscript{120} Minnie F. Howard, Tacoma, WA, to Minerva Teichert, no location, 28 July 1918, Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU.
\textsuperscript{121} Minnie F. Howard, Pocatello, ID, to Minerva Teichert, Sterling, ID, 6 February 1920, Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU.
busy to more than attend – but I am so interested in her work that I don’t want her left out in this.”

Regarding the aid from her early supporters, Teichert penned,

... these good people as well as the many other dear friends I have in Pocatello have encouraged me and believed in me. They purchased my little attempts at art and praised my efforts in school. The only reward I can ever give is to be worthy of all the success they have wished me.

She recognized that these surrounding networks of support deeply contributed to her development, appreciation by others, and success.

As she was so encouraged, Teichert saw the opportunity to take her art to a wider audience. As the economic stress of the Great Depression impressed upon their cattle ranch in the early 1930s, she desired to use her art to assist with their dire financial needs. In the summer of 1931 she borrowed her mural *Handcart Company* (1930) from the walls of the local Cokeville LDS chapel and, along with several other unframed paintings, visited the prominent Salt Lake City art dealer, Alice Merrill Horne (figure 36).

Horne became the most important figure for Teichert’s success, beyond her realm of family, friends, and the boundaries of her small town. Horne was a pioneer not only as an advocate for the arts but also for women in Utah in the twentieth-century. She had established herself by becoming the second woman legislator elected

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122 Alice P. Thompson, no location, to Ella Kohlhepp, no location, 14 February 1917, Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU.


124 Before becoming a great promoter of the arts in Utah, Horne studied watercolors with the artists James T. Harwood and Mary Teasdale. She also became involved in many leadership positions within the state of Utah, the Salt Lake City art community, and the LDS Church. Horne served as the Salt Lake County chairman of the Democratic party, founded and served as the second president of the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, organized and worked as regent of the Daughters of the American Revolution, was chair of the Utah Peace Society, served as a member of the General Board of the LDS Relief Society, gave two addresses (one on service as a legislator and the other one on art in Utah) at the 1904 International Congress of Women in Berlin, and wrote two books, *Devotees and Their Shrines* (1914) and *Columbus, Westward Ho* (1921). Harriet Horne Arrington, “Alice Merrill Horne, Art Promoter and Early Utah Legislator,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 58, no. 3 (Summer 1990): 274. Eastwood, *Letters*, 13; Alice Merrill Horne, Salt Lake City, UT to Minerva Teichert, Cokeville, WY, 3 September 1931, Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU; Wardle, *Minerva Teichert: Pageants in Paint*, 39.
to the Utah House of Representatives in 1898. There she introduced the Art Bill, which established a state institution, the Utah Institute of Fine Arts, designed to encourage and promote Utah art and artists, and in addition created a state-owned collection, which is now called the Alice Art Collection. After Horne’s tenure in the state legislature, she continued her advocacy for the arts and artists in Utah, including Teichert who was fortunate to gain her as a professional ally and dear friend. In order for a woman to succeed as an artist in the public sphere that was predominately masculine, it helped immeasurably to have not only a representative, but also a confident woman to help surpass cultural barriers.

Horne welcomed the invitation to represent Teichert, and within a few months began to organize exhibitions and place her works to the best advantage. Deciding to mount Teichert’s first show in Ogden, Utah, Horne hoped for success and wrote on 27 December 1931, “We’ll see if there is any good in Ogden. If there is they will rise and lift there [sic] hats and open their sacks for a picture by this their muralist. Lets [sic] try! …”

Of this display in Ogden, Horne later reported:

Well, Dear Mrs. Teichert! Your name appears tonight in the Deseret News on the front page as showing your murals at the Cattle Show in Ogden. Congratulations my dear muralist.

Tomorrow the Standard Examiner will give a writeup to the painter of western themes from the hearth of a ranch home.

You have carved out your own fortune. You have fought the fight, you have WON,... The Trappers is co-lo-sal! … No one but Minerva Teichert would, or could undertake so complicated a thing so difficult to accomplish –

Satisfaction was on everyone’s face, and I most pleased of all – … No one thought of them (your pictures) except as something by a wonderful woman on a

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125 Teichert’s birthplace was North Ogden, Utah, which is why Horne considered her “their muralist.” Alice Merrill Horne, Salt Lake City, UT, to Minerva Teichert, Cokeville, WY, 27 December 1931, Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU.
ranch. My experience is that among so many coming and going some one [sic] will want to buy. ..\textsuperscript{126}

Horne began to provide early encouragement that Teichert’s paintings would be admired and subsequently sold, an indication of tangible success for an artist. Horne’s words reflect an appreciation and enthusiasm for both Teichert and her work that are obviously heartfelt.

Horne’s praise was uplifting, “All of the artists, almost to a man think you an unusual painter, and appreciate you greatly. … To me your murals are great.”\textsuperscript{127} Horne commented that even the men artists of the establishment found her works engaging. Writing on \textit{Immigrants to New York City (Jewish Refugees)} (1938) (figure 29) she commented, “Dear, Minerva, this last is a masterpiece [\textit{Immigrants}] … this is complete. a unity. Congratulations. It has been direct – and nothing interfering with your passion, so chaste is the gift.”\textsuperscript{128} Horne shared her reaction to another work of art, \textit{Handcart Company at the Spring}, “I could go on my knees to it. How perfectly lovely it is. A charming rendition. A period painting. Really this surprises me with its strength and its delicacy, its romance, its pattern, its versatility.”\textsuperscript{129} With these words, it is possible to see Horne not just as an appreciative patron or promoter of Teichert’s art, but as a friend sincerely and deeply committed to her artistic vision and sensibility.

Early in their arrangement in the 1930s, Horne expressed to Teichert how much her works were reminiscent of those by Puvis de Chavannes, the reputable nineteenth-century

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\textsuperscript{126} Alice Merrill Horne, Salt Lake City, UT, to Minerva Teichert, Cokeville, WY, 8 January 1932, Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU.
\textsuperscript{127} Alice Merrill Horne, Salt Lake City, UT, to Minerva Teichert, Cokeville, WY, 29 February 1932, Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU.
\textsuperscript{128} Alice Merrill Horne, Salt Lake City, UT, to Minerva Teichert, Cokeville, WY, 30 April (1932?), Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU.
\textsuperscript{129} Alice Merrill Horne, Salt Lake City, UT, to Minerva Teichert, Cokeville, WY, 14 February 1936, Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU.
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French artist known for his mural paintings. The comparison to an established male, European artist, an uncommon analogy, sent Teichert the subtle message that she was coming out of obscurity and being elevated to the mainstream canon. In a letter to Teichert dated 26 August 1934, Horne begins her salutation with, “Dear Puvis de Chavvanes [sic]” and continues,

“The Cache” is impressive. The composition is lovely. You must sustain the spiritual quality by choice clear color. … There is an air of venture, of danger, of chivalry. There is dignity and restraint!! … I love it all and love you for your inspiration. God bless you to accomplish what is in your heart and mind. (emphasis original)

On another occasion, Horne took the opportunity to write, “Once More Puvis de Chavannes! In other words, gifted, great! What more can I ask, fair lady, than when I rub the ring a Genii [sic] enters with the design complete and prepared by Minerva!!” Several months later Horne decided, “No use to call you after Puvis de C. you must take your own place.” The following year Horne visited the Art Institute of Chicago, and on a postcard decorated with Puvis de Chavannes’ The Sacred Grove, Beloved of the Arts and the Muses (1884-89) (figure 37), she related to Teichert, “now as I go from room to room of creations by the masters I am constrained to still remember you and hope and pray that your life may be spared to do the things no one but you are prepared to do. lovingly and prayerfully, Alice Merrill Horne.” Women, such as Horne, with their esteem and encouragement elevated Teichert in the far reaches of her remote residence.

130 Alice Merrill Horne, Salt Lake City, UT, to Minerva Teichert, Cokeville, WY, 30 April (1932?), Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU.  
131 Alice Merrill Horne, Salt Lake City, UT, to Minerva Teichert, Cokeville, WY, 26 August 1934, Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU.  
133 Alice Merrill Horne, Salt Lake City, UT, to Minerva Teichert, Cokeville, WY, 16 May 1935, Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU.  
134 Alice Merrill Horne, Chicago, IL, to Minerva Teichert, Cokeville, WY, 15 May 1936, Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU.
Teichert turned to Horne when the family ranch fell into jeopardy in 1932. Horne eagerly intervened with the Teicherts’ mortgage company and also secured additional painting sales. In a series of correspondence between Horne and George W. Smith, Manager of the Smith Realty Company, the mortgage company agreed to purchase a cowboy painting for one hundred dollars, and in addition Horne sold several works to various auxiliary organizations within the LDS Church.135 The proffered cash was enough to satisfy the Teicherts’ mortgage debt. Not only did Horne wish to beautify the state of Utah and its institutions, but also to enable and rescue a woman whose work she so greatly admired.136

Throughout the 1930s and 40s, while Teichert continued to raise her family, answer the needs of relatives and friends, assist with ranch life, market milk and cream from her back door, paint wedding and funeral bouquets as gifts, and large-scale Western murals tacked to her living room wall, Horne continued to assist her. She lent photographs of Native Americans in order to assist with a particular commissioned painting, Washakie’s Wedding (c.1935) (figure 38), as well as sent supplies, such as paintbrushes when Teichert was in need of basic materials.137 In the Salt Lake City press, Horne endorsed and defended Teichert’s work, which coming from a champion of the arts, brought further credibility. Horne also became instrumental in including Teichert’s works in exhibitions.138 On one occasion, a photograph of Horne hanging a Teichert painting in a

136 Alice Merrill Horne’s own words, expressing the purpose of her Art Bill, were “to bring a more beautiful life to the people of Utah” as quoted in Harriet Horne Arrington, “Alice Merrill Horne, Art Promoter and Early Utah Legislator,” 271.
Z.C.M.I. department store exhibition appeared in *The Deseret News.* (figure 39)\(^{139}\) With Horne’s advocacy, Teichert exhibited at the Alice Merrill Horne summer salons, Z.C.M.I. Department Store Tiffin Room, LDS Lion House, Utah Art Institute, and Art Salon in Salt Lake City, Utah.\(^{140}\)

Horne was also influential in instigating commissions and placing Teichert’s paintings and murals in private institutions and public places.\(^{141}\) In 1935 Horne wrote about meeting with Mr. Burg, who was in charge of decorations at the Hotel Utah. Because he liked Teichert’s work immensely, he requested two murals for the President’s Suite.\(^{142}\) Horne also arranged the sale of paintings to establishments such as West Junior High School, South High School, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and Brigham Young University.

At Horne’s suggestion, Elizabeth McKay Hill approached Teichert to design a quilt with an Indian motif for the Mormon Handicraft shop. At the end of her solicitation, Hill penned, “We admire your paintings very much and wish that the Lord will bless you with continued health and happiness so that you might be permitted to live many years to help us all see more beauty in the

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\(^{139}\) “Sponsor Hangs Painting in New Mural Exhibit,” *The Deseret News*, 27 February 1939.


\(^{141}\) Alice Merrill Horne assisted with the placement of two Bonneville themed murals in public buildings, one for West Junior High School in Salt Lake City, UT and the other to South High School in 1935. To South High School in 1935, Horne also sold *Weavers* (c. 1935) and *Indian Basket and Pottery Makers* (c. 1935). Wardle, *Minerva Teichert: Pageants in Paint*, 44, 46, 89, 147, 150, 217 – footnote 97.

\(^{142}\) Alice Merrill Horne, Salt Lake City, UT, to Minerva Teichert, Cokeville, WY, 10 July 1935, Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU.
world.” For nearly two decades, Teichert’s art continued to grace the living rooms, tearooms, schools, and churches in the state of Utah with the avid support of Alice Merrill Horne. In 1948 at Horne’s funeral, Teichert was selected to give her eulogy.

Several years after Horne’s passing, Teichert made arrangements with another female agent, Ethel Ernest Murrell at the Connor Hotel in Laramie, Wyoming. Once again, a sympathetic and well-connected woman figured large in assisting the remote artist. Murrell was enthusiastic to place Teichert’s Western and religious works with patrons in Colorado, Texas, and Wyoming. In correspondence to family, Teichert wrote of Murrell sharing a book about the artist Rembrandt, exhibiting her paintings in Laramie, and arranging sales transactions.

In one particular letter, Teichert exuberantly wrote to her daughter Laurie about a sizable sale. Murrell had sold six murals and eagerly wanted more, even religious scenes. Murrell was not a member of the LDS Church, and requested an explanatory script so that she could explain the religious stories to her clients. Teichert penned to her family,

To make it short we sold the six murals I had down there … After they were packed up and gone Mrs. Murrell called me and told me how awful it was down at the Hotel without them. She said: ‘We can’t stand it. Get us something quick.’

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143 Elizabeth McKay Hill, Salt Lake City, UT, to Minerva Teichert, Cokeville, WY, 27 January 1939, Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (1888-1976) Collection, 1900-1998, Special Collections, BYU.

144 Minerva Teichert, Cokeville, WY, to Laurie Teichert Eastwood, no location, 16 June 1954, Laurie Teichert Eastwood and Marian Wardle Papers, Special Collections, BYU; Eastwood, Letters, 152. This is the first mention of Murrell in correspondence, when Teichert writes about exhibiting her works with Murrell in Laramie.


146 Minerva Teichert, Cokeville, WY, to Eastwood Family, no location, 4 June 1958, Laurie Teichert Eastwood and Marian Wardle Papers, Special Collections, BYU; Eastwood, Letters, 177; Minerva Teichert, Cokeville, WY, to Eastwood Family, no location, 6 July 1958, Laurie Teichert Eastwood and Marian Wardle Papers, Special Collections, BYU; Eastwood, Letters, 178; Minerva Teichert, Cokeville, WY, to Eastwood Family, no location, 1 November 1959, Laurie Teichert Eastwood and Marian Wardle Papers, Special Collections, BYU; Eastwood, Letters, 185; Minerva Teichert, Cokeville, WY to Eastwood Family, no location, 3 May 1956, Laurie Teichert Eastwood and Marian Wardle Papers, Special Collections, BYU; Eastwood, Letters, 164; Minerva Teichert, Cokeville, WY, to Laurie Teichert Eastwood, no location, Friday (middle of November 1957), Laurie Teichert Eastwood and Marian Wardle Papers, Special Collections, BYU; Eastwood, Letters, 174.
An hour or two after-ward [sic] she called again and said, ‘I’ve heard you have a lot of Book of Mormon murals have you?’ I said: ‘I’ll say, forty-two of them stored here.’ … [Murrell replied] ‘I’ve always respected the Mormon Church. Please send six or eight to me as quick as you can. Send the script and I’ll tell it to everyone.’

Recognizing Teichert’s talent and perceiving a ready and expanding market, Murrell was eager to place the magnificent works, even religious ones that she did not fully understand. Nonetheless, most of the paintings sold by Murrell were of Western themes, such as pioneers, trappers, and Native Americans. A letter from Murrell to Laurie, written after Teichert’s passing, reflects her appreciation for this visionary painter. She states, “I admired your mother immensely, not only as an artist, but as a fascinating woman. Her wit and extensive intellect made our visits a delight.” Murrell’s professional friendship extended this sense of feminine community and further advanced Teichert’s success beyond the horizon of her small, distant town.

**Female Communities in Paint**

The centrality of community is abundantly evident in Teichert’s pioneer paintings. Teichert painted Western themes throughout her professional career, and painted more Western scenes than any other subject. She saw the Mormon pioneer legacy as a part of the story of the American West, an unusual assumption in early twentieth-century thought. Her passion for creating her Western large-scale murals, so often based on historical events, echoed the intention of the artist C.C.A. Christensen, as she similarly desired to teach others about the faith and

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147 Eastwood, *Letters*, 166.
historical legacy of the Mormon pioneers. According to art curator Robert O. Davis, Teichert’s pioneer paintings were meant:

  to instill within contemporary Latter-day Saints consciousness of the pioneers’ sacrifice. The viewer was meant to be edified and motivated by her narrative interpretations through identifying with them. The epic themes she chose were expressed heroically – larger than life – as part of a grand vision designed to bring the viewer to the level of faithfulness possessed by the pioneers and by Minerva Teichert herself.

Fulfilling the fateful charge from her instructor Robert Henri, Teichert returned to the West to paint the Mormon story according to her vision, one that emphasized human figures, particularly women, communities, and the events that shaped their lives.

  Unlike the pictorial narratives of Weggeland, Ottinger, and Christensen, the pioneer dramas represented by Teichert, equally large in scale, are filled with human figures in the forefront, relegating the landscape as background. The forms of men and women occupy most of Teichert’s canvases, as they wend their way, share in their struggles, and demonstrate their commitments. Yet, it is the women and their sense of community who subtly overshadow the drama in Teichert’s accounts. The women in Zion Ho! (Handcart Pioneers) (c. 1935) (figure 21), Handcart Pioneers (1939) (figure 41), and A Refreshing Respite from the Wagon Train (1955) (figure 25) dominate the narrative, focusing our attention on the humanity, not on the scenery, of their journey. The woman in Handcart Pioneers (1932) (figure 40), highlighted by her richly

150 Teichert asserted, “We must paint the great Mormon story of our pioneers in mural decorations so that ‘he who runs may read.’ The story thrills me, fills me, drives me on … We want to make a great American art, to develop a style distinctly our own … We’ll tell our stories on the walls.” Minerva Teichert’s eulogy for Alice Merrill Horne, as quoted in Wardle, Minerva Teichert’s Murals: The Motivation for Her Large-Scale Production, 78 and Davis, 41.

151 Davis, 13.

152 The art historian Marian Ashby Johnson notes, “Unlike many western artists, Minerva was only incidentally interested in landscape. It became more of a backdrop for her figures. She was heard to observe that anyone can paint a landscape and that she did not want to waste her time when she could paint more important subjects.” Marian Ashby Johnson, “Minerva’s Calling,” Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought 21, no.1 (Spring 1988): 134.
hued shawl, looms grand in scale against the backdrop of blurred wagons in a Western landscape.

Teichert’s wagon train suggests a close-knit community as far as the eye can see. In general, her figures are often placed side-by-side, almost shoulder-to-shoulder. Would a group of travelers on a journey through an expansive terrain realistically walk or work so closely together? Teichert’s close placement of figures in *Washday on the Plains* (1938) (figure 30) and *Get Ye Up into the High Mountains, Oh Zion* (1949) (figure 43) indicates they experienced this campaign with the support of one another.

In *Washday on the Plains* (1938) (figure 30) Teichert’s palette of pastel blues, greens, pinks, and yellows define a feminine sensibility in the midst of a Western atmosphere characterized by prairie-style clothing, women’s laundering activities, and pioneer wagons. The clothesline of gentle hues serves as a backdrop, ushering the female figures to the forefront. The women filling the canvas are stalwart, strong, and hardworking, as they engage side-by-side in similar activities of washing, wringing, carrying, and hanging clothing. The women appear social while accomplishing their tasks, as they launder clothes that benefit the community of pioneer travelers. They are joyful and conversant as they incline towards one another, and their domestic responsibilities are elevated by their social network, sociality, and sense of community.

Another pioneer painting, *A Refreshing Respite from the Wagon Train* (1955) (figure 25), reveals young children cared for by active women, kneeling, leaning, shouldering, and carrying. They work together in close proximity and in a shared endeavor. This painting is in contrast with C.C.A. Christensen’s paintings *Crossing the Mississippi on the Ice* (c. 1878) (figure 15), *Handcart Pioneers* (1900) (figure 14), and *Handcart Pioneers Coming Through the Mountains* (no date) (figure 44). In Christensen’s compositions there are a greater number of male figures,
who have an air of individuality, and in turn are dwarfed by the immense scale of nature’s grandeur. Christensen’s women are featured few and far between, bent over, and with backs turned to the viewer. His vision of pioneers in the American West figures small in comparison to the landscape, in dramatic contrast to Teichert’s message where the focus is upon the actors rather than upon the land.

Teichert was sympathetic to Native American subjects and enjoyed rendering their genre as a part of her Western repertoire. They too were a part of the American West as it was reinterpreted and redrawn. In her Native American painting, Weavers (c. 1935) (figure 34), women are engaged and intently participate in the construction of a close-to-complete native rug. The women working together accomplishing their various tasks reflects a community of their own. The woven fibers and design of the textile can be read as the women being intertwined together. The pattern of the rug is like a Navajo stepped design with strong intersecting and connected lines. The Navajo tradition of weaving, passed down through matrilineal lines, evokes further a sense of feminine community.

Another rendering of women working in harmony is found in Teichert’s Indian Basket and Pottery Makers (c. 1935) (figure 32). The women are focused on their individual endeavors, and are creative and industrious with their basket-making. They articulate a social network, sociality, and community as they sit in proximity and work unitedly on efforts together. As they have similar aspirations, they are available to render support complementing one another.

153 During her younger years Teichert lived in the midst of the Shoshone and Bannock tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation in Idaho, and witnessed Native Americans both in town and on the reservation. Teichert’s view of native people presents them in their romanticized past. Wardle, Minerva Teichert: Pageants in Paint, 134.

This sense of community defined by people settling in the American West is reflected in
the concept of unity and building, not in conquering or destroying. Groups of women, in
communities, worked together to carry out activities such as providing assistance, bringing relief,
achieving a common goal, and helping others succeed. Just as the women in *Indian Basket and
Pottery Makers* (c. 1935) (figure 32) demonstrate collaboration, another community of women is
found in Teichert’s *Cokeville Wyoming Ward Relief Society Quilters* (1932) (figure 31). Here a
tall woman, Mrs. Dean, appears to lead a gathering of women as she stands dressed in what
could be construed as her Sunday best, in light diaphanous, feminine fabric, delineating her as
the focal point. She is joined by other women, seated nearby and also pictured on the wall. The
quilting session is a group effort, and as they face each other, their work at hand is central in
creating a patchwork quilt. Like the fabrics in the quilt, in colorful variety, the women are woven
together, to assist one another – or some other in need. The patchwork pattern in the coverlet can
be seen as a social network diagram, with actors at its points and lines representing dyadic ties
and intersections. The angle of the quilt invites the viewer into the scene. Teichert makes
room for us to join in the assembly by employing artistic constructs and larger than life figures in the
foregrounds, additionally seen in other works such as *Zion Ho! (Handcart Pioneers)* (c. 1935)
(figure 21) and *Handcart Pioneers* (1939) (figure 41).

Additionally, in each of these Western paintings, a common motif highlights the sense of
community inherent in settling the American West. Conestoga wagon or handcart wheels
literally rolled the Mormon pioneer effort westward. As the wheel spokes unite at a central hub,
as well as radiate outward to form a bound, common circumference figuratively forming a
community, they articulate a cooperative undertaking and contribute to moving the work
forward. Prominent wagon wheels are featured in many paintings, including *Washday on the
Plains (1938) (figure 30), Handcart Pioneers (1939) (figure 41), and A Refreshing Respite from the Wagon Train (1955) (figure 25). In one painting, Get Ye Up into the High Mountain, Oh Zion (1949) (figure 43), a handcart wheel is positioned central to the midst of traveling pioneers, while two other wheels appear near the end of their procession. One can even see the outline of a spoked wheel in the shape of a forming basket in Indian Basket and Pottery Makers, c. 1935 (figure 32). Perhaps Teichert was purposeful in including these details of a symbol evoking the communities so central to the settlement of the West.

The iconography of the wagon wheels joins with other representations of community in Teichert’s Handcart Pioneers (c. 1935) (figure 42). Teichert’s colorful figures occupy fully half of the canvas, comprising the entire foreground, as they walk shoulder-to-shoulder in a tightly knit group. They gather together, as the party sojourns en masse, leaning silently into their synchronized path, signifying that the difficult undertaking is to be accomplished collectively. The representation of women and men are sharply contrasted. The women are full figures rendered in rich detail, including vibrant fabrics with dynamic patterns, individualized styles of hair and hat, along with a full-length shawl. Their close placement underscores their consortium. The women and the pioneers as a whole become elevated as they ascend the mountain, and uplift one another as they focus together in harmony wending their way. The men in the work, in contrast, are all obscured, and are represented almost entirely with identical-looking hats, as backs and shoulders, with nary a face in sight. They walk and work alongside women and children, but this is not their story. It is the story of communities, with strong and individually rendered women journeying together to a shared destination.

Conclusion

The American West, so described by the nineteenth-century historian Frederick Jackson Turner and depicted by artists such as Albert Bierstadt, Frederic Remington, and even C.C.A.
Christensen, tells of a vast, uncultivated landscape that was explored, conquered, and settled by heroic frontiersmen. The account obscures, as noted by historian Patricia Nelson Limerick, women and their substantive contributions, which were notably eclipsed from any accurate renderings. Minerva Teichert, having heard pioneer stories from her maternal ancestors and having learned from experiences in her own life, knew a contrary narrative. She knew that settling the frontier or developing one’s artistic talents required collaborative networks or communities, especially for women in a man’s world or a man’s West. If a woman pioneer in the West or a woman artist had a chance of success, it was on account of women banding together. In the framework of a supportive network, with women assisting other women, together they could overcome obstacles and make contributions.

With reference to Van der Tuin’s concept of feminism, Teichert stands as an intergenerational connection, carrying the pioneer stories of her grandmother Hickman, along with her own embodiment of agency, to her children and posterity. This sense of intergenerational community is manifest in her life and her paintings. Her consciousness of the settlement and maintenance of Western lands was carried out by both men and women, and particularly women in supportive and collaborative relationships. Teichert’s own feminine networks – family, friends, and professionals – with whom she enjoyed symbiotic relationships and who encouraged and enabled her to succeed, are emblematic of the supportive individuals who comprise the communities so important to the taming of the American West.

As in so many of Teichert’s pioneer paintings, the compelling counter-narrative is on display. The landscape is vast, but it does not overwhelm or dwarf the train of humanity. Man is contrasted with nature, but this is not a story about the lone hero in the wilderness. Women are
central to the narrative, but not merely included as an added afterthought. They and their feminine circles of support are, in important measure, the story.
FIGURES

Figure 1  Minerva Teichert, 1916. Photograph

Figure 2  Minerva Teichert (at far left) with friends, Pocatello, Idaho, c. 1916. Photograph.
Private collection
Figure 3  Minerva Wade Hickman. Photograph

Figure 4  Mary Ella Hickman Kohlhepp, c. 1910. Photograph. Private collection
Figure 5  Minerva with her sisters Eda, Sara, and Annalee in American Falls, Idaho, 1915. Photograph

Figure 6  Rose Hartwell, *Nursery Corner*, c. 1910. Oil on canvas, 23 ¾ x 28 ¾ in. Brigham Young University Museum of Art
Figure 7  Mary Teasdale, *Mother and Child*, c. 1920. Oil on canvas, 30 ½ x 24 ½ in. Utah State Fine Arts Collection, Salt Lake City, Utah

Figure 8  Fra Dana, *Birdcage*, n.d. Oil on panel, 18 x 24 in. Montana Museum of Art & Culture
Figure 9  Florence Ware, *Dry Creek, Autumn at the Foot of the Mountains*, 1930. Oil on board, 16 x 20 in. Springville Museum of Art

Figure 10  Louise Rönnebeck, *The Fertile Land Remembers*, c. 1936. Oil on canvas, 60 x 120 in. U.S. Treasury Department award for Worland, Wyoming, U.S. Post Office (moved to Casper, Wyoming U.S. Post Office, 1970s)

Figure 12  Danquart (Daniel) Anthon Weggeland, *Handcart Company*, 1908. Church History Museum, Salt Lake City, Utah
Figure 13  George M. Ottinger, *Away Away to the Mountain Dell: The Valley of the Free Immigrant Train*, 1897. Oil on canvas, 20 x 40 in. Springville Museum of Art

Figure 14  Carl Christian Anton Christensen, *Handcart Pioneers*, 1900. Oil on canvas, 25 3/8 x 38 ¼ in. Church History Museum, Salt Lake City, Utah
Figure 15  Carl Christian Anton Christensen, *Mormon Panorama Eighteen*, also known as *Crossing the Mississippi on the Ice*, c. 1878. Tempera on muslin, 77 7/8 x 114 in. Brigham Young University Museum of Art

Figure 16  Albert Bierstadt, *In the Sierras*, 1868. Oil on canvas, 13 x 16 in. Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum
Figure 17 Thomas Moran, *The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone*, 1893-1901. Oil on canvas, 96 ½ x 168 3/8 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum

Figure 18 Frederic Remington, *A Dash for the Timber*, 1889. Oil on canvas, 48 ½ x 84 1/8 in. Amon Carter Museum of American Art
Figure 19  Charles M. Russell, *Battle of Belly River*, c. 1905. Oil on canvas, 18 ¼ x 22 ½ in.
Private collection

Figure 20  N.C. Wyeth, *The Great Train Robbery*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 44 x 33 1/8 in.
Brandywine River Museum
Figure 21  Minerva Teichert, *Zion Ho! (Handcart Pioneers)*, c. 1935. Oil on canvas, 56 x 49 in. Church History Museum, Salt Lake City, Utah

Figure 22  Minerva Teichert, *Portrait of Sara Kohlhepp*, 1917. Oil on canvas, 72 x 36 in. Private collection
Figure 23  Minerva Teichert, *Gypsy Dancer*, c. 1940. Oil on canvas, 46 x 44 ½ in. Private collection

Figure 24  Minerva Teichert, *Carmen*, 1948. Oil on canvas, 52 x 38 ½ in. Private collection
Figure 25 Minerva Teichert, *A Refreshing Respite from the Wagon Train*, 1955. Oil on artist’s board, 42 x 54 in. Brigham Young University Museum of Art

Figure 26 Graduating Class, Pocatello High School, 1906. Photograph. Private collection (Minerva Teichert is pictured standing on the right, while Eva Kasiska is seated on the left)
Figure 27  Robert Henri’s Art Students League painting class, New York, c. 1916
(Minerva Teichert is on the third row, fourth from the right)

Figure 28  Minerva Teichert, *Esther Before the King*, 1916. Oil on canvas, 63 x 45 ¼ in. Church History Museum, Salt Lake City, Utah
Figure 29 Minerva Teichert, *Immigrants to New York City (Jewish Refugees)*, 1938. Oil on canvas, 85 x 61 in. Brigham Young University Museum of Art

Figure 30 Minerva Teichert, *Washday on the Plains*, 1938. Oil on canvas, 40 x 94 in. Brigham Young University Museum of Art
Figure 31  Minerva Teichert, *Cokeville Wyoming Ward Relief Society Quilters*, 1932. Oil on canvas, 41 x 28 in. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Cokeville Wyoming Meetinghouse

Figure 32  Minerva Teichert, *Indian Basket and Pottery Makers*, c. 1935. Oil on canvas, 72 x 98 in. Private collection
Figure 33  Minerva Teichert, *Moving South* (also known as *Squaws* or *The Squaws*), 1949. Oil on canvas, 60 x 101 in. Brigham Young University Museum of Art

Figure 34  Minerva Teichert, *Weavers*, c. 1935. Oil on canvas, 68 ½ x 94 ½ in. Private collection
Figure 35  Minnie F. Howard. Photograph

Figure 36  Alice Merrill Horne. Photograph
Figure 37  Puvis de Chavannes, *The Sacred Grove, Beloved of the Arts and the Muses*, 1884-89. Oil on canvas, 36 7/16 x 90 15/16 in. Art Institute of Chicago

Figure 38  Minerva Teichert, *Washakie’s Wedding*, c. 1935. Oil on canvas, 77 x 125 in. Brigham Young University Museum of Art
Figure 39  “Sponsor Hangs Painting In New Mural Exhibit,” *The Deseret News*, February 27, 1939

Figure 40 Minerva Teichert, *Handcart Pioneers*, 1932. Oil on canvas, 67 ½ x 50 in. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Cokeville Wyoming Meetinghouse
Figure 41  Minerva Teichert, *Handcart Pioneers*, 1939. Oil on canvas, 59 x 46 in. Church History Museum, Salt Lake City, Utah

Figure 42  Minerva Teichert, *Handcart Pioneers*, c. 1935. Oil on canvas, 99 x 84 in. Church History Museum, Salt Lake City, Utah
Figure 43  Minerva Teichert, *Get Ye Up into the High Mountain, Oh Zion*, 1949. Oil on canvas, 42 x 60 in. Private collection

Figure 44  Carl Christian Anton Christensen, *Handcart Pioneers Coming Through the Mountains*, (no date). Oil on canvas, 15 x 24 1/16 in. Private collection


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